

Fear not, stand firm, see God (Exodus 13:17-14:13)

Please turn in the Bible to Ex 13 and as you do I want to turn back in history to the year 1563.

As the Reformation in Germany matured, one of the most important influential documents of the Reformed faith was published that year in Heidelberg Germany, the Heidelberg Catechism.

Those were decades of political upheaval, persecution of Christians, and plagues killing many.

Some wanted to fight, others wanted to flee, there was much fear about the future

‘Question 1: What is your only comfort in life and death? Answer: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation...’

In other words, God has control and care, from big things to every little hair

That’s a great statement and a great setup to our study. Last week we learned about redemption

- being bought with a price so we’re not our own, all we are and have belongs to the Lord.
- The precious blood of the Lamb pays the penalty of sin
 - o and takes away the power of sin and Satan.
- We still battle the presence of sin in this life till death, but our hope and comfort is:
 - o our Savior is also a sovereign sustainer.
 - o He preserves, provides and guides all for His glory and our good.
 - o This is our blessed assurance
 - o This makes us glory in our Redeemer who cares and carries us.

This is what Israel would need in what they faced and it’s what we need in whatever we’ll face

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. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.”¹⁸ But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “**God will surely visit you [NASB ‘take care of you’]**, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here.”²⁰ And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.²¹ And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.*

14:1 *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.³ For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’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.⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”⁶ So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him,⁷ and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.⁸ And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.⁹ The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-*

zephon. 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.

¹¹ 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?” ¹² 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.” 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. [we’ll stop there for today, so much to see just in v. 13]** This is God’s word for God’s people today. Paul says in the NT what was written in the OT was ‘written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope’ (Rom 15:4). 1 Cor 10 says specifically when the Israelites ‘were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea...these things took place as examples for us...they were written down for our instruction...’ ¹ So this true story is for our instruction, endurance and encouragement, so that we might have hope.

This is for all God’s people to say amen

The key statement for all God’s people is v. 13: **Fear not, stand firm, and see...** That’s my outline:

1. **Fear not** (after v. 10 they see the enemy and fear, look back and want to turn back)
2. **Stand firm in God** (looking at world, it’s hard to stand in difficulty, discouragement)
3. **Look to your salvation** (see who God is and what He does for His glory, our victory)

In v. 11-12 they say hurtful things, but Moses sees there’s fear behind it.

- I would’ve taken it personally, responded defensively or sarcastically like they did,
 - o but Moses responds graciously

#1. Fear not – how v. 13 starts, how? In context, trust God’s guidance and presence

In ch 13 Moses wrote God knew what He was doing. **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 [God’s ways are not man’s and often not the shortest or easiest, by design]. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.”* ¹⁸ **But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.**

In ch 14 it looks like they’re wandering, lost on their trip, shut in by the sea

My parents are in the Philippines right now where I grew up

- I remember many family trips across country on furlough
- I couldn’t see where we were going and wondered if my dad was lost
 - o (old days without GPS, using a foldout map while driving, trying not to crash!)
- We rode all summer with no cellphones or video games, no DVD player or even AC
 - o (yes, you kids can survive!).

In those days you had to see out the window

- my parents would point out things for us to see.

I saw a tornado one time, a cliff I feared we’d die driving off, breaking down in the desert, etc.

My sister and I sang at churches ‘mommy and daddy were missionaries,

took us to places kind of strange and scary, daddy said it was all necessary...

we drove a million miles in our big blue van from the great wide north to the southern land

...I’m an MK [missionary kid], I wouldn’t trade it, through everything that came we always made it.’

That's true and it's also true what my dad would sing to churches,

- a big part of a missionaries' life can be 'raising your kids from the front seat of your car, while you're driving down the road trying to figure out where you are.'²

I can see now I wouldn't trade those experiences.

- And dad *did* know more than me and what I could see from the backseat.
- He *did* know where he was going and what he was doing (most of the time).

I also learned my mom had eyes in the back of her head somehow and saw better than I thought.

- And as I got older, somehow my parents got wiser in their guidance
 - o (it's like after my teenage years I could see it).

The children of Israel couldn't see yet from where they were,

- they only see what's strange and scary here
- they think Moses has lost it and their lives will be lost.
- It will seem like a million miles in the desert before they're done,
 - o but God wants them to look out and see.

They will make it through everything and later learn their heavenly Father knows best.

He always knows what He's doing and where it's all going, though we can't see it

One way to better see is to believe and heed the guidance God's Word already gave us.

13:19: *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here."*

- He obeys what the Word said.
- He didn't need to pray for guidance about this,
 - o he needed to obey the guidance God already put in His Word.
- And there's a lot of guidance in His Word to obey if we want to see Him guide us.

This is from Gen 50, where Joseph told the sons of Israel what was intended for evil God had intended it for good all along, then he told them "*don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your little ones.*" *And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them... "I am about to die, but God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land He promised..."*³ He made Israel swear '*God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry up my bones from here'... he was embalmed and placed in a coffin...*'⁴

Joseph knew God had promised the Exodus and wanted even his mummy to be part of it

Steve read Heb 11 '*By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*'

By faith, Joseph could see beyond this life and an Egyptian culture that prized burial in Egypt.

- He rejected that religion and royal tomb and riches to be with God's people
 - o and that guides Moses, too.
- He trusts God's promise, and it's being fulfilled in Ex 13.

It takes faith to see God's guidance to 'undertake, to guide the future, as He has the past.'

The hymn says your 'confidence let nothing shake; All now mysterious shall be bright at last...

*Leave to your God to order and provide...Be still my soul: the Lord is on your side.'*⁵

*We sang 'Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah...let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey'*⁶

And that takes us to the 2nd part of this 1st point: fear not, trust God's guidance **and presence.**

That's what the fire or cloudy pillar was and did. ²¹ *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.* ²² *The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.*

Keep a finger here and flip ahead to Ex 40

God first appeared in a moving fire in Gen 15 when He promised Israel's exodus to Abraham. God's presence passed through cut animals to commit to keep the covenant He cut personally. At the burning bush, a small pillar of fire of God's presence as He promised '*I will be with you...*'⁷ Now an even bigger pillar of fire and cloud but this time 24/7 to show God is with them always.

Isa 63:11 says when God led Israel at the Red Sea, He '*put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit...the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest, so you led them...*'⁸ Sounds like fire/cloud leading is God the Spirit?⁹

Ex 40 is when they built the tabernacle, a place of God's guidance and presence for the priests, that's where the fire and cloud came to rest. Look at **40:36**: *Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.* ³⁷ *But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up.* ³⁸ *For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.* Later after the Jerusalem temple was built there was a permanent fiery cloud in the holiest place

Ex 13 is before scripture is written, God literally showed Israel where to go daily

Do you wish you could see God's presence and guidance today like that?

- Maybe a cloud over the person God wants you to marry?
- At least a small pillar of fire over a school or job for you?

We have something better in the NT. We have the Spirit-inspired scripture that's sufficient and Jesus promised '*the Spirit of truth...will **guide** you into all truth...he dwells with you and will be **in you**...the Helper, the Holy Spirit...will **teach you all things**...Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*'¹⁰

That's John 14 & 16, in the upper room, looking ahead to Pentecost

In the OT the Spirit rested over them in one place and one big fire,

- in Acts 2 the Spirit came in individual flames of fire that rested over believers.

Not just with them, but within them to guide:

- 1 Cor 3:16 to the church '*you are God's temple...God's Spirit dwells in you...you are that temple.*'
- 1 Pet 4:14 tells Christians '*you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*'
- Blessings all ours and 10,000 beside, we have His own dear presence to cheer and guide¹¹

Trust the Spirit's guidance and presence.

- He's the comforter, He comes alongside to help,
- and if He convicts you, respond to His leading.
- Let's walk by the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit.

Israel had a pillar of fire to light up their path at night

- God's Spirit illuminates the Word as a lamp to our feet
- and light to our path more than Israel had here.
- 2 Pet 1:19 says we need to pay attention to the Word like a lamp shining in a dark place

Heb 13:5 *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* ⁶ So we can confidently say, *"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear..."* In the end of Ex 14, v. 8 Israel was going out confidently,

- but in v. 9 Pharaoh sent in the cavalry, and it says Israel feared greatly
- Egypt's military is marching in, and Israel is surrounded by chariots.

It's a show of force, Pharaoh himself like a presidential motorcade, riding Ground Force 1

14:11 *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?' ¹² 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.'* ¹³ And Moses said to the people, *'Fear not, stand firm...'* [or stand by/stand still¹²]

The NT picks up that language and adds 'stand firm in the Lord'

That takes us from point #1 'Fear not...' to a 2nd statement for our 2nd point: **Stand firm in God**

Israel was encamped in front of the sea, nowhere to go.

- They can't run and would rather return.

At the end of v. 10 they cry out to the Lord,

- but then in v. 11 they lash out at the Lord's servant.

That often happens, even as believers, things don't go the way you'd like,

- and you talk like you don't like those who love you and are trying to help.
- Or you feel under attack, and you verbally attack your leaders or loved ones.
- You shoot the messenger with words. You blame and accuse.

You grumble or vent, all you can see is the irritant and not your irritable sinful heart

Maybe you don't do it to a church leaders' face, but you tell others your complaints

- or maybe you use vague terms (our church doesn't, the elders...).
- You think 'better back in the old days' or would be better under better leadership.

Some don't say v. 12 out loud 'leave us alone,' they just leave and say nothing, that's sin, too.

- Maybe you take it out on your spouse or parents or other believers:
 - o 'What have you done to me? Didn't I tell you leave me alone? I told you so!'

Or maybe you see difficulty and just think it's all over, you get apathetic or pessimistic

Israel got shaken up and their heart spilled over with scalding sarcasm:

- 'are you taking us to die out here because of a grave shortage back there?'
- Did Egypt, the land of the tombs, suddenly run out of tombs?'
- That's ridiculous ridicule, like we do.
- Some of you are gifted at sarcasm. It hurts others.

When life gets hard, some think it's better to serve the flesh

- or go back to what enslaves (videos, even games to escape).

Maybe you retreat from difficulty going into your private small world and your small screen.

- Or you don't like what's going on in your life or family, and take it out on your family.
- Don't give in to sin. Don't give up hope. Don't retreat. Stand firm.

Don't leave. Love. 1 Cor 16:13 '**stand firm in the faith**' and '*let everything you do be done in love*'

Israel wants to turn back to slavery. We see approaching evil and may want to turn to legalism.

Gal 5:1 *For freedom Christ has set us free; **stand firm** therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery*

... It's been said in trials we look back or we choose to 'go right back to our old ways of coping: anger, addiction, depression, distraction...the way we used to live...we return to the same...old sinful attitudes...old nasty habits...Our temptation is to run away, cry out in fear, or try to fix things on our own. Instead, God orders us to stand our ground.'¹³ What does that look like?

- It's standing together. Phil 1:27 '**stand firm**...contending as one man for the faith of the gospel'¹⁴
- It's not a flesh and blood struggle, it's spiritual warfare. Eph 6:11: '*Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to **stand firm** against the schemes of the devil...that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**. **Stand firm**, therefore...*' (NASB95)
- It's remembering God's sovereignty. Isa 46:8-10 '*stand firm, recall it to mind...for I am God... declaring the end from the beginning...my counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose*'

Fear not, that's #1, stand firm is #2, now 3rdly finally in Ex 14:13: Look to your salvation
Moses said to the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you...

Today would be the day of salvation, they'll see it and they won't see their enemies anymore.

- We'll see the Red Sea divide next time,
 - o but we need to see this isn't just a past historical event.
 - o This becomes God's pattern of salvation.

In 2 Chron 20, a great multitude beyond the sea comes against Israel

- and they again feel like they'll die, they fear, want to flee.

King Jehoshaphat prays '*we are powerless before this vast number that comes to fight against us. **We do not know what to do, but we look to You.** All Judah was **standing** before the LORD with their infants, their wives, and their children [then the Spirit and God's spokesmen tell God's people]... '**Do not be afraid** or discouraged because of this vast number, ...**stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD. He is with you...Do not be afraid...for Yahweh is with you.**'¹⁵*

Fear not – trust His presence – stand firm, and look to His salvation

Israel saw they were trapped by the sea and thought they'd be dead.

- It's not that bad for us, but maybe you feel like you're in a dead-end job or relationship
- or trapped by circumstances or sin.

We can feel powerful, hopeless over far less. I can fear the future. I see much discouragement.

- We don't see advancing Egyptians, but we see advancing evil in our culture wars.
- You can't escape the militant world by homeschooling or your 'work-from-home' setup.
- If you're only holing up and huddling up with your family and church family,
 - o you're hiding your light from a world that needs it.
 - o Let your light shine, speak up, stand up for Jesus and help your kids stand.

We need to help others see the salvation of the Lord Jesus that He worked for Israel and us

Jude 5 '*...Jesus, who saved a people out of the Land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who didn't believe.*'¹⁶

- You say 'I don't see the name Jesus here?'
- That's an English name, it's Yeshua in Hebrew.
- In v. 13 Moses says in the Hebrew '*see **the yeshua of Yahweh. He will work for you today.***'
- It's the noun from the name later given to Jesus, because He would be salvation from sin.

Isa 52:10 '*all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation/yeshua*' then it prophecies Jesus (Isa 53).

- I read last week Simeon in the temple said holding the baby named Yeshua '*my eyes have seen your salvation.*'

Have your eyes seen the salvation of the Lord Jesus? I need to end turning our eyes upon Jesus.

Moses says look to your ‘*yeshua, He will work for you today.*’

- Do you see salvation is not at all a human work?
- You don’t work for it or earn it, see your salvation is the Lord working for you!
- His work on the cross is how we see salvation.

If you think salvation is by doing good works or trying to be a good person,

- you’re lost in your sin and you will die without hope.

But today can be the day of your salvation.

- See your sin and see the salvation of the Lord Jesus.
- Repent, turn from sin and follow Jesus, no turning back.
- Then you can fear not, and you stand in salvation.

It’s all of grace and it’s all for His glory. That’s what God said in the end of v. 4,

- He did this for His glory in defeating Egypt.
- It’s the same in His defeating evil and saving us for His glory.

The enemies of Jesus tried to trap Him, they had Him surrounded in the garden,

- and He truly ended up dead. But He didn’t stay dead!
- See the salvation of the Lord, defeating death, the last enemy!

We heard earlier from Heb 11 about these Exodus events, then it says we’re to keep ‘*looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...consider him so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted...*’

There’s much in this world to fear, that makes it hard to stand firm,

- hard to keep salvation before us

But if we keep fixing our eyes on Jesus, turning our eyes upon Jesus,

- the things of this world grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.
- Fear not, stand firm, look to the Savior.

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:1, 6, 12.

² Songs by Grady Toland, ABWE missionary.

³ v. 20-24 HCSB.

⁴ v. 25-26 NASB.

⁵ Katharina von Schlagel, “Be Still My Soul.”

⁶ William Williams, “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah.”

⁷ Exodus 3:12.

⁸ Isaiah 63:11-14.

⁹ See James Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 39.

¹⁰ John 16:13, 14:17, 26-27.

¹¹ From “Great is Thy Faithfulness” by Thomas Chisholm.

¹² NASB, NKJV.

¹³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus*, 386, 388.

¹⁴ NIV84.

¹⁵ 2 Chronicles 20:12-17 HCSB.

¹⁶ ESV, also LSB. Some manuscripts and translations have “the Lord” in v. 5, but even so, the end of v. 4 is ‘*our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*’ (which would be “the Lord” in the next verse, whether or not the name Jesus was in the original text).