

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY TWELVE

Between the Devil and the Deep Red Sea

Exodus 14

God wanted His people to learn that He would fight their battles for them. All they had to do was to wait and trust.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you ever found yourself in a jam? How about in a tight squeeze? Or in a pinch? In a pickle? Between a rock and a hard place? Up a tree?

The slang expressions vary, but we know what they mean. We've all experienced unpleasant, tight situations that we couldn't wiggle out of. They're called *predicaments*.

Your predicament might involve a relational conflict you can't resolve no matter how much you try. You may be in debt and unemployed, and you thought it couldn't get worse until an eviction notice dropped in your mailbox. You may be facing a health problem, and doctors are in a quandary to know how to help. The common element in these situations is the feeling of desperation. You're trapped. You can't see a way out. All you can do is cry out to God.

The Israelites faced a serious predicament at the Red Sea. Their toes came right up to the watery edge of desperation. There was no way forward and no escape from Pharaoh's army raging from behind.

Had God freed them from slavery just to lead them into this trap? The answer was *yes!* This was right where God wanted them to be, so He could teach them a never-to-be-forgotten lesson in His power.

The Red Sea represented a test of faith like the ones we face in our seemingly hopeless predicaments. Let's find out how God brought them through and how we can find God in our moment at the Red Sea.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Do you feel the walls of a predicament squeezing you in? Invite the Lord into your tight place and ask Him to show you His way through.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“This is a day to remember forever—the day you left Egypt, the place of your slavery,” Moses announced as the Hebrews took their first baby steps as a free people (Exodus 13:3). Four times in his declaration, Moses exulted in the “powerful hand” of the Lord bringing the people out of Egypt (*Exodus 13:3, 9, 14, 16 NASB*). He couldn’t stop celebrating God’s power!

And yet, the Lord had only begun to flex His might.



Observation: Divine Power on Display

Bible maps are an essential study tool in *observation*.¹ Use your Bible maps to trace the Israelites’ route out of Egypt, or view the online map, “*Exodus from Egypt*,” at insight.org. Begin by locating the main highway from Egypt to Canaan. This road hugged the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, veering northeast and going “through Philistine territory” (Exodus 13:17). This was the most direct route to the promised land. But the Lord took His people a different way..

Where did the Lord take His people instead, according to [13:20](#)? Find these sites on your Bible maps. How did He lead them, according to [13:21](#)?

For all their lives, the Israelites had been fighting their own battles, taking on life in their own strength. The Lord wanted them to learn that He would fight their battles. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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The Lord Planned—Exodus 14:1–5

The Israelites camped at Etham for a while, and then, to their surprise, the Lord ordered them “to *turn back*” (Exodus 14:2, emphasis added). According to [Exodus 13:18](#), where was God leading His people?

God *purposefully* led His people to a dead-end. Awaiting them at the Red Sea was a faith lesson that could only be learned in a predicament where there’s nowhere to look for help but up.

Read [Exodus 14:1–2](#), and find the possible locations for these sites on your Bible maps or the online map, “[Exodus from Egypt](#),” at [insight.org](#).

Notice on your map the lakes in this region. The Hebrew term, *yam suph*, translated “Red Sea” can also be translated “Sea of Reeds,” which may refer to one of these lakes. At this location, the Israelites would have seen massive Egyptian fortresses to the north, the barren Egyptian desert to the south, and the sea to the east. *It was a geographic cul-de-sac.*

God had a reason for leading His people into this vulnerable place. What was His plan, according to [14:3–4](#)?

Isn't it remarkable what a predicament will do to your independent spirit? You strut through life like a human peacock until suddenly you come to the end. Then you look up. Then you cry out. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Egyptians Pursued—Exodus 14:5–9

God’s plan worked. When Pharaoh and his officials saw the Hebrews backed into a corner, they took the bait. In [Exodus 14:5–9](#), what did they do that God said they would?

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The Hebrews Panicked—Exodus 14:10–14

When the Israelites saw the world’s most powerful army thundering toward them, their first response was what we all do when terrified: “They cried out to the LORD” (Exodus 14:10). Their second panic response was typical as well. What did they do in *Exodus 14:11–12*? What raging emotions do you observe?

In the past, Moses might have cowered, but he had just witnessed God unleash ten devastating plagues on the Egyptians. He understood God’s power. Without a hint of tremor in his voice, Moses stood tall and announced, “Don’t be afraid” (14:13). What other commands did he give in *14:13–14*?

The human response to a threat is to be afraid, run, fight, and tell everyone about it. God’s counsel was just the opposite. Don’t be afraid. Stand still, Watch Him work. Be quiet. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Lord Protected—Exodus 14:15–30

The Hebrews were right where God wanted them. Nowhere to flee and no way to fight, they had to depend solely on the Lord to save them. What did He promise, according to *Exodus 14:15–18*?

What was the Lord’s first act in *14:19–20*?

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Outline the sequence of events that night and early the next morning in *Exodus 14:21–30*.

Pharaoh thought he had the Hebrews in his grasp: “The Israelites are confused. They are trapped in the wilderness!” (Exodus 14:3). But he and his army were the ones trapped. In a twist of irony, the Lord “threw their forces into total confusion” (14:24) and “swept them into the sea” (14:27).

The People Praise—Exodus 14:31

How did the Israelites respond to God’s divine power on display in *Exodus 14:31*?



Interpretation: Divine Lessons Learned

What treasures of truth from the Red Sea experience did the Israelites pass on to future generations? Let’s dig into four details of the account to uncover some gems.

First, God intentionally led His people to a dead-end (*Exodus 13:18*). What lesson could God teach His people only through this dire situation?

Second, Moses saw the same threat coming that the people saw, but he responded differently than they did (*14:13–14*). What proper response did Moses model?

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Third, the Lord planned the whole incident to display His power and glory (*Exodus 14:4*). How was God's divine display at the Red Sea a foundational first step in Israel's spiritual journey?

Fourth, the threat didn't end until God acted. What did the people learn about God's nature and His ways?

For God's lessons to be etched into our hearts, we must be surrounded with no escape route. Then we learn the hidden treasures of faith that must be found before the Red Sea opens. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God's Pathways in the Wilderness

God parting the Red Sea became a dominant theme in Scripture. Later, when God exiled the Israelites to foreign lands because of their rebellion, He offered them hope through His prophet in *Isaiah 43:16–19*. Read the prophecy and note the Red Sea theme. What was the Lord's message to His people?

Like the Hebrews passing through the waters of the Red Sea, we escaped spiritual death by following Jesus through the waters of spiritual baptism (*Romans 6:3–4*). Death has no claim on us! What do we have to fear? Let's learn from Israel's Red Sea experience how to handle our fearful predicaments.

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Application: Our “Red Sea” Experiences

The truths Israel learned at the Red Sea can be distilled into four key principles we can apply.

First, *it takes tight places to break lifetime habits*. Are you in a “Red Sea” situation that demands more than you can handle? If so, what’s the situation? What crutches have you been leaning on to cope? How might you need to deal with these habits?

Second, *when hemmed in on all sides, the only place to look is up*. Where are you looking for rescue? Are those places helping or hurting you? Where is God inviting you to look?

Third, *if the Lord is to get the glory, then He must do the fighting*. If you could fight your way out of a “Red Sea” predicament, you’d get the glory. But you can’t. What are you left to do? How will God receive the glory?

Fourth, *Red Seas open and close at the Lord’s command, and not until*. How does this truth of God’s providence offer you comfort in the predicament you’re facing?

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Would God's people remember God's deliverance at the Red Sea when facing other enemies just as threatening as the Egyptians? We'll see. For now, they celebrated God's victory. Let's join them!

*"I will sing to the LORD,
for he has triumphed gloriously;
he has hurled both horse and rider
into the sea.
The LORD is my strength and my song;
he has given me victory.
This is my God, and I will praise him—
my father's God, and I will exalt him!"* (Exodus 15:1–2)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You have delivered me from my greatest enemy. Because Christ is my Savior, I need not fear death. I trust You when I come to the end of my strength and stand on the shores of my own "Red Sea." I know You will deliver me, and I will give You all the glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2024–2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1975, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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