**Rescued: The Great Escape**

Exodus 14:10-30

October 5, 2025

Dan Hoffman

I’ve never really been a linguist. I’m decently good at English, but that’s about it. And yet, I’ve always been fascinated by words that exist in one language but don’t translate to another.

One of my favorites is the German word “Kummerspeck” (Coo-Mur-shpeck) which, if translated literally, would mean “grief bacon.” What a picture! Think thick slices of bacon slathered in a rich sauce of sadness. Of course the actual meaning refers to the extra weight you put on from emotional overeating. English needs that word!

Well the Bible is also full of words like this. Not grief-bacon, but words that don’t translate perfectly. So think “sin” or “salvation.” Culturally these words have baggage and are viewed as ancient or irrelevant. But that’s because we come at them from the cultural context we find ourselves in that can’t translate them perfectly.

So for example, sin in a law-based culture like ours means something like breaking the rules – so speeding could be sin. But when I lived in Korea, which is a shame-based culture, sin was making someone look bad. So speeding was no big deal, but if you challenged something your boss said that was sin. Of course neither of these pictures are exactly what the Bible means when it talks about sin – instead it’s a lot more about the failure to be humans who fully love God and others.

Well the focus in today’s passage is salvation. And this is a word I grew up thinking was about going to heaven when I died, but that’s a fragment of the actual meaning. The biblical word for salvation means something much bigger but doesn’t translate easily.

So what do we do with Bible words like these? Well, the good news is, while English doesn’t help us, the Bible goes to great lengths to define these terms itself, not by giving us a dictionary definition, but by putting them inside the context of story. And salvation is a word Exodus defines. Here God rescues His people from what enslaves or traps them. And that’s where we’re going today.

So if you’ve got a Bible open it to Exodus 14. Last night out at Ness Lake where our church is currently on retreat, we dug into the power of the Passover Meal and the moment where God’s judgment passed over the houses where people took shelter under the blood of a lamb. This was how God saved His people from their sin.

But every household that did not take shelter under the blood of a lamb lost the firstborn son of their family. It didn’t matter whether they were the son of a prisoner in a dungeon or Pharaoh who sat on the throne, every home that did not seek refuge under the blood of a lamb was affected.

And when this happened Pharaoh summoned Moses and told him “Leave my people! Take your flocks and herds and go worship the Lord as you have requested.” And the Hebrews had already packed so they moved out that very night.

But in the morning, after watching them go, Pharaoh’s heart hardened again. And that’s where we pick up today. So if you’ve got a Bible open it up to Exodus 14. We are going to start in verse 10. Would you stand with me as we come before God’s word? Hear now the word of the Lord.

[Read Exodus 14:10-30a]

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

So the Lord saved Israel some 3200 years ago, but this isn’t just an amazing story, it’s one of the central defining moments of the people of God that we are part of today. See throughout the New Testament, much of the salvation language that Jesus and Paul use points back to this encounter. So for example in 1 Corinthians Paul says:

I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

So there are connections between being baptized and coming through the Red Sea. This means questions like “are you saved” can’t be understood without looking at this story. And whatever else salvation might mean, at its core is YHWH rescuing His people from what traps and enslaves them. Now there are three questions to this that I want to unpack today. What do we need to escape from, how can we escape it, and how does the escape happen?[[1]](#footnote-1)

First, what do we need to escape from?... So imagine how exciting this night would have started out. “Did you see how our neighbours dumped all their gold at our feet as we headed out the door. Crazy!”

But all the excitement was short lived. One night’s walk out of Egypt and they find themselves in front of the Red Sea. Now they knew it was here. But this is the way they were led. Obviously they had planned to walk around it. But it’s with that wall in front of them that they look in the rear-view-mirror and notice the dust of Pharaoh’s army rising. And they know he’s on his way to kill them. He’s had a change of heart.

Now what would be a rational response in a moment like this? Is it panic or is it faith?... Well Israel chooses panic. In verse 11 they cry out to Moses:

“Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren’t there enough graves for us in Egypt?... Didn’t we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, ‘Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. (Exodus 14:11-12)

We were happy Moses, but you forced us to come out here and now it’s going to turn out just like we said.

…

Hmmm… This isn’t rational thought speaking, this is delusion. See none of what they just said actually happened. Instead right after the burning bush we read:

Then Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called all the elders of Israel together. Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. Then the people of Israel were convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped. (Exodus 4:29-31)

That’s what actually happened. And then they watched God move in power through the plagues which culminated in their miraculous escape. And only after all of that do they find themselves here panicking. They’re totally disconnected from reality.

See it’s delusion when you watched God move yesterday but then find yourself in a new bad place today and think all hope is lost. That’s delusional.

So why are the people thinking like this? Well, it’s because it’s one thing to take the slaves out of Egypt, but it’s another thing to get Egypt out of the slaves.

…

Alright, jump forward to today. In Canada freedom is defined as getting to make your own decisions and be your own boss. Freedom means having no master at all. But it turns out this isn’t a new idea – and it’s just as delusional today as it was then.

So in the moment at the Red Sea Israel was totally free. They were out of Egypt, but they hadn’t arrived at Mt. Sinai yet, so they hadn’t received God’s law and submitted to following Him. This means they had no master, and yet they weren’t happy. Why not?

Well, it’s because they weren’t actually free, they were still slaves. In fact there is no such thing as having no master. If you aren’t serving God, you are serving something else. And everything else we serve ends up enslaving us.

…

So Tony Stark – Ironman – is amazing. He’s one of my favorite superheroes because he’s a lot like me – except I’m not a genius billionaire playboy – but other than that we’re the same. See Tony isn’t like the other superheroes. He’s not super strong like Hulk and he can’t bend time like Dr. Strange. He doesn’t actually have any superpowers. He’s just a smart guy with some money. So is he really a superhero at all?

Well that’s a good question and it bugs him and drives him. So one time he says, “I just want to prove I’m not just a selfish guy in a suit.” He’s trying to make himself count.

Well all this culminates in Endgame when he risks everything to wield the Infinity Stones, even though he knows it will kill him. He does it so he can say – I am Iron Man. And Disney owns Marvel so of course this is Tony’s hero moment, but it’s not hard to see that in fact he had to lay his life down because his desperate search all along was to matter. And genius billionaire playboy wasn’t enough.

And this is a pretty human feeling. We all have this nagging sense that I don’t really count; none of the stuff I’m doing matters, and we want to fix this. We want to make a difference. And so everyone lives for something. Some people get rich, other people collect trinkets and some people invest in their family, but we all give ourselves to something in order to count. And the things we give ourselves to become our masters. If you have to have something to be happy then you must get it no matter what.

…

Now of course we don’t like to think of ourselves as slaves. But this isn’t a new problem. Israel was living in this delusion 3000 years ago. A little later they complained to Moses:

If only we had died… in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve (Exodus 16:3)

In other words we weren’t slaves back in Egypt – life was great! But that’s ridiculous. They were slaves. And we are just as ridiculous in our thinking. We want to give people the impression we are having a great time no matter what has trapped us.

…

The other day I was talking with a friend of mine who used to deal drugs but met Jesus and got free. But every now and then he bumps into his old friends who are still making hundreds of thousands a month. But when he looks at them, he sees that they are putting on a strong and happy face but underneath they are scarred and trapped. They can’t get out.

And this isn’t just true of drug dealers; you are enslaved to whatever it is that you have to have in order to be happy. So the reality is that we all live for something, and whatever it is we live for controls us.

…

Alright, how does God set us free? How does He save?

The second thing we see in this text is that God saves through a decisive act. In other words there is a moment when we aren’t saved and are enslaved to whatever it is we live for, and then God does something to set us free.

So Pharaoh sets out with his chariots and Israel is condemned to death. And as long as they are on the west side of the Red Sea this is their reality. But the moment they pass through the sea to the other side they come out from under that sentence of death, and they are saved. God saves through decisive moments. Here’s this same picture from the lips of Jesus. In John 5 He says:

I tell you the truth, those who listen to My message and believe in God who sent Me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life. (John 5:24)

Jesus says there is a decisive moment when we used to be condemned in sin but then we pass through from death to life. And this happens when we choose to trust Him.

Now this idea is totally different from every other religion. In every other religion salvation is the result of a long process. So in Buddhism it’s people who follow the 8-fold path carefully enough that gain enlightenment. In Islam God accepts people who give themselves to living out the 5 pillars well enough. And you only find out if you’ve made it at the end of your life. But Christianity isn’t like that.

Jesus says that there can be a moment where you know you’ve already passed from death into life right now. And you can know that you’ve got abundant life because you can look back at that decisive moment.

So think of the Apostle Paul. He was a Pharisee before he came to Christ which meant he had a master. In Philippians 3 he says:

I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. (Philippians 3:6)

So Paul, or Saul as he was called then, built his life on being moral. This was why he mattered – he was good. And he thought he was pleasing God by following the rules, but the irony was he was killing people in the process. And this is what happens when we serve a master. We don’t see the lunacy of our slavery. But it’s there.

So Saul knew about Jesus, and he thought God was happy with him for killing Jesus’ followers, but in a moment on the road to Damascus Saul met Jesus. This was his Red Sea moment. He went in as Saul the righteous judgmental murderer and came out Paul the forgiven. And Paul’s testimony became:

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

That’s an incredible statement for a murder to make. How could Paul say this? It wasn’t because somehow he built up enough good credit to pay for all the bad stuff he did. Nothing he could do could accomplish that. But he had nothing to accomplish. Jesus had brought him to life in that decisive moment on the road to Damascus.

Now that was Paul, but we get this picture first in Exodus and then it’s the same all the way through. When God saves you there’s always a decisive moment. Of course it’s not usually as dramatic as with Paul, but the idea of being born again or saved are parallels. It’s as you come to the end of yourself and realize you are hopelessly lost, that you are primed to receive what Jesus offers. And that always happens in a moment. One second you are trapped in your sin, and the next you realize you’ve passed from death to life.

Now the point is this is something Jesus does. So becoming a Christian isn’t about learning all the right things about God. And it’s not about trying hard enough to clean your life up. It’s not even about having perfect faith.

Like think about it: when Israel passed through the Red Sea with a wall of water on each side and the Egyptians bearing down behind, certainly there were some people there who were saying “I knew YHWH would do something. I had no idea it would be this awesome, but I’m not really surprized because I’ve seen His awesome before.” There were undoubtedly some people with strong faith walking the sea path.

But there were undoubtedly others who spent the whole time looking left and right at the towering walls of water and glancing behind at the Egyptians bearing down and all the while they were saying “Oh man, this water is going to fall any second and if it doesn’t those chariots are going to run me down.” There would have been people with pathetic faith on that sea path.

But here’s the thing, everyone who walked that path got to the other side all the same. So it’s not how strong your faith is that matters, it’s who you’ve put your faith in. And Jesus tells us it’s as we put our trust in Him that we pass from death to life. This is the defining moment we are saved.

…

So everyone serves a master, and anything we serve other than God enslaves us. But God saves us from these masters in moments of decisive action where He takes us from death to life. But how does this work?

Like how is it that Israel got saved? I mean you could say, “Ha! Those genocidal Egyptians got what they deserved.” But any statement like that totally misses what’s going on here. Like the Israelites weren’t better than the Egyptians so God rescued them. If anything they were worse even after they got rescued.

Like they got to see God’s power firsthand and still they panicked and complained. And they doubled down on this. A little later God literally wrote down exactly what He wanted them to do on stone tablets they still couldn’t follow Him for two days in a row. And God knew this was going to happen, so how is it that He saved Israel? How does His salvation work?

…

Well there is one more side to God’s salvation that gets painted in this text and it becomes a theme that shows up over and over throughout scripture. You have to see this if you’re going to understand salvation. So look at verse 11. Here the faithless people whine to Moses:

“Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren’t there enough graves for us in Egypt? (Exodus 14:11)

And then immediately the faithlessness of Israel gets contrasted with the faithfulness of Moses. So we read:

But Moses told the people, “Don’t be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today… The LORD Himself will fight for you.” (Exodus 14:13-14)

That’s faith. Moses looked at the sea he couldn’t cross, and Pharaoh’s army bearing down and saw God getting ready to move. He didn’t know what was going to happen. He had no plan. He just believed God had it. So how do you think God responded to Moses?... Well, look at the next verse:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the people to get moving! Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea... so the Israelites can walk through (Exodus 14:15-16)

Wait a minute. God rebukes Moses when the people whine. Their faithlessness gets put on Moses’ tab. And this isn’t a one-off situation. A couple chapters later when the people build a golden calf. Moses puts himself on the hook for them. He tells them:

“You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” (Exodus 32:30)

So Moses represents the people and mediates for them. And this is how God designed His salvation to work. Of course Moses was just picture of this. He was just a sinful man himself, but God used him to foreshadow the Great Mediator who was to come.

And so it was that when Jesus hung on the cross, He cried out “My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?” See Moses got the rebuke the people deserved, but Jesus got everything you and I deserve. In that moment He drank the full cup of God’s wrath.

And He did this with the promise that when we put our faith in Him He will lead us out of bondage to what enslaves us. He took death so we could cross over into the abundant life He created us to enjoy. So have you trusted Him for your deliverance? Have you experienced that decisive moment?

If you haven’t you can have it right here. Just see how broken and condemned you really are and realize you can’t save yourself. So it’s insanity to keep trying. Instead trust Jesus to take you to the other side. If you will do that, He will save.

…

But one last thing. What if you’ve trusted Jesus, and like the Israelites crossed over to the other side, but you’re still tied to some old masters. Like you’ve managed to get the slave out of Egypt, but you can’t get the Egypt out of yourself. What then?

Well, while Israel went through the sea in a decisive moment, they still needed to learn how to walk in the freedom God had won for them, and we need to do the same. So in Colossians 3 we read:

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ…think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

Paul says, “you have a new identity, but you need to live into it.” So just because we are children of the king doesn’t mean our old masters and their thorny ways stop temping us. They don’t. But we don’t have to listen to them anymore – we can tune our minds to Christ.

And so if you find your old masters calling, tell them, “You don’t have the joy you promise. Jesus is my joy. You aren’t my pleasure. Jesus is my pleasure. You aren’t my source of meaning or significance. Jesus is my life. I don’t need you to be free, I am free in Christ.

And as we do that, we can grow into the freedom Jesus won for us. So trust Him and set your mind on what He says is true about you. Let Him take you from death to life.

1. Outline adapted from Tim Keller <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-great-escape/> (Accessed Oct 2, 2025) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)