

Delivered – B/w a Pharaoh and a Wet Place

3/1/26

Exodus 13-17 – 14:31

Sunday AM

I had a humbling, spiritual experience a few weeks ago at Kroger in the self-checkout line. You know how self-checkout is advertised as convenient? It's not! ***It's a spiritual experiment designed to test your faith.***

Everything's was going great at first. I was scanning items like a pro. I was so good, I think the manager was about to make me the employee of the month. Then it happened, I had an unexpected item in the bagging area and it threw me into scanning paralysis w/ everything coming to a screeching halt. So, there I stood, frozen. I couldn't move forward or backward – and the lone employee assigned to work self-checkout was already helping (5) other unfortunate souls who too were trapped in my nightmare. Even worse, were the people in line behind me sympathetic – NO! And as the line grew longer, I could see them looking at their watches, tapping their fingers and getting passive aggressive w/ me – I could feel them judging me as if I had done something wrong. And so, I did what any of you would've done – I started whimpering lame excuses to total strangers to justify my circumstances.

This is Exodus 14. Israel was standing on the banks of the Red Sea thinking – we should've just stayed in Egypt. They weren't being rebellious, they were just caught b/w a Pharaoh and a wet place – and they didn't know what to do except blame God and Moses.

After all, in front of them was the Red Sea and behind them, coming after them, is Pharaoh's angry army – and they seemingly had nowhere to go.

What we see in **Exodus 14** isn't just an historical escape, it's a divine blueprint for how to handle God-ushered impossible moments we find ourselves in that we see no way out. So, what are we do? (4) things!

I **REMEMBER** Who Led You There

*Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God didn't lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." So, **God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.** And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt. 13:17-18*

When the Israelites left Goshen, they didn't take the road everyone expected. Geographically, the most direct, efficient, and well-traveled route out of Egypt to Canaan was the ***Via Maris***. But instead of moving NE toward freedom, God took them SE and told them to turn back and camp by the sea near Pi-hahiroth.

God gave Moses clear directions – and while they may have not made sense to him, He followed them. So, the Israelites weren't where they were b/c Moses made a wrong turn, but b/c Moses followed God's lead.

BTW – notice that God didn't lead them in a straight line – to teach us that seldom if ever does God's will move in a straight line. **Big Lesson** – if it's a straight-line, be careful – b/c God might not be in it.

Now – from a practical/military standpoint, this made no sense. On the map, this route looked like confusion. To Pharaoh, it looked like vulnerability as it appeared the Israelites were lost in the land – but this was exactly the point. ***God was baiting Pharaoh.***

SEE – the reason God didn't choose the *fastest* road – the *safest* road – or the *obvious* road – but the road that led them to a place where escape would be humanly impossible was to position them for yet another divine intervention for His glory and their good.

Truth is – if any of us would've been on the route-planning committee, we wouldn't have recommended taking the scenic route or camping in a cul de sac w/ the sea behind us and the Egyptian army in front of us.

This is b/c we love plans that make sense to us – while God loves plans that bring Him glory and accomplish His will. This is b/c God is ALWAYS up to something BIGGER! He's playing chess when we're playing checkers.

God is always doing 1,000 things in our lives at once – yet we may be aware of only (3) of them. unknown

Don't miss – our route often seeks to avoid difficulty to allow us to handle things ourselves w/out God while His route always forces us into a **crisis of dependence** so that we have to trust Him always and in all ways.

While Israel could only see geography – God saw His glory and they're good. When they had nowhere left to run, God opened a way where no way existed. When escape was impossible – **God was undeniable**.

In this moment – their geography became their theology and this detour became their deliverance.

Point – quite often w/ God – our obedience doesn't lead to **ease** – it leads to **exposure** b/c God is doing something we can't yet see. Even more, sometimes, God leads us into tight spaces/places to display His power in our lives and to shape our hearts to Him.

Remember – God wasn't just getting Israel out of Egypt. He was getting the Egypt out of Israel and making it so that Egypt would no longer be a problem.

Point – when God leads us b/w a Pharaoh and a wet space, we have to settle the question of His sovereignty and will first. This is paramount if we're trust Him instead of ignoring Him and taking a wrong turn.

So, the next time you're in a no-win situation – ask – am I here b/c God has led me here or b/c I chose to ignore His will for my will – putting myself here.

Here's the deal. If you feel you've arrived somewhere by accident – panic is logical. If you think you've been abandoned – fear is inevitable. But if you know God has led you where you are – everything changes. **WHY** – b/c God rarely explains Himself before He reveals Himself. Meaning tight spot aren't punishment – it's God positioning us for something greater.

II Don't Let **FEAR** Edit God's Story

When Pharaoh's army appeared, the people panicked and suddenly forgot who was w/ them and for them.

LBH – *if Pharaoh's chariots were kicking up dust behind us, most of us wouldn't be forming a worship team; we too would've formed a complaint committee.*

So, they began crying out – *Was it b/c there were no graves in Egypt that You brought us out here to die? It would've been better for us to serve the Egyptians.*

Have you ever noticed how fear can rewrite memory?

Not only had the Israelites forgotten the beatings and misery of slavery in Egypt that caused them to cry out to God, they forgot His miraculous intervention and provision in the plagues, Passover, and pillar of fire.

WHY – b/c they allowed their current circumstances to dictate their response instead of recalling God's faithfulness to move on their behalf.

Why do we do this? Why do we allow our faith to be blown away by the immediacy of our circumstances?

B/c what is urgent always feels more real than what is eternal. The Red Sea was visible. The chariots were audible – while God's promise requires remembrance.

Fear seems to collapse time, cutting off yesterday's faithfulness and tomorrow's promises to trap us in the tyranny of right now. So, instead of asking, "What's God doing?" we ask, "What is happening to me?"

But unlike fear – faith lives in the long view. So, when the moment we're in starts to feel bigger than the God who led us there, if we're not vigilant, panic will take faith hostage.

Israel didn't lose faith b/c God failed them. They lost faith b/c the present felt louder than the past. So, even though the past was just yesterday – they gave in – allowing their panic to shape their theology.

When this happens, fear has a way of rewriting history and shrinking God b/c fear doesn't just distort the past – it diminishes God's perceived power in the present.

Even worse – such a crisis has a way of making Egypt look attractive again and making slavery look/sound nostalgic when freedom gets inconvenienced. *The only thing worse than Pharaoh behind you is wanting to go back to him.* This is where faith comes in.

Faith is a refusal to panic and the call to remember God's faithfulness. Martin Lloyd-Jones

Truth is – *most of us don't need a miracle – we need a memory.*

So, whenever you find yourself b/w a Pharaoh and a wet space, preach your history w/ God back to yourself. Don't let fear rewrite your story.

III **STAND** Firm Before You Step Forward

Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today – you shall never see again forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." 13-14

Moses responded to the situation w/ 3 commands: *do not be afraid, stand firm, see the salvation of the Lord*

Notice that God didn't give them a strategy to move – He gave them instruction to actively prepare b/c the 1st battlefield wasn't the shoreline – **it was their hearts.**

LBH – when a crisis hits, we do most people do – we Google it or phone a friend. After all, nothing builds spiritual assurance like reading internet comments at midnight or getting advice from people who'll only tell us what we want to hear. But God didn't tell Israel to refresh their feed. He told them to stand firm.

Trust in yourself and you're doomed to disappointment... Trust in others, and you'll likely be led astray... but trust in God, and you're never to be confounded in time or eternity. D.L. Moody

Standing firm doesn't mean doing nothing. It means refusing to panic while trusting God by praying, seeking, and fending off the doubts of the devil.

Standing firm is active not passive. It means refusing to let fear make your decisions before God speaks. So that in the middle of the night when everything feels stuck and your mind starts racing – you can choose trust instead of spiraling into worst-case scenarios. It means ¹ *praying instead of pacing*, ² *waiting instead of forcing*, and ³ *remembering instead of panicking*. It's the quiet decision not to *send the text, quit your job, make idle threats, or emotionally check out* just to relieve the pressure. Standing firm is active refusal to let fear set the direction, but instead, to allow God to work even when nothing seems to be moving.

I have to tell you that my wife is really good at this. So often when difficult moments arise, she runs to her Bible/prayer. She begins w/ God. She digs in and says – I'm not letting go until God shows up and speaks.

Point – When you're b/w a Pharaoh and a wet space, you don't need a new plan as much as you need a settled and seeking heart – which is available if you'll turn to Him and trust that He can and will make a way.

Song – *God will make a way, when there seems to be no way. He works in ways, we cannot see, He will make a way for me. He will be my guide, hold me close and to His side, w/ love and grace, for each new day, He will make a way – God will make a way.*

IV **MOVE** When God Opens the Way

The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. The children of Israel shall go on dry ground thru the midst of the sea. I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So, I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over them.” 14:15-18

This is where it gets real fun. God said to Moses – stop delaying and get moving. Tell everyone to go forward.

Forward? Yes! Where – towards the water? Yes! God wants us to swim for it? No! He wants us to stop complaining and start obeying. And when they did – God moved splitting the Red Sea.

Faith always steps before clarity shows up b/c faith doesn't move in certainty – its applied in uncertainty placed in the certainty of God's character/promises.

LBH – most of us are waiting for the sea to split before we move – while God is waiting for us to move before He splits the sea. Yet once they stepped out in faith, God stepped in w/ power providing a strong east wind to divide the waters and dry out the ground.

When God calls us forward, obedience is faith in motion that steps out to allow God to step in.

Faith is like rappelling. The hardest step is the first one b/c that's when you decide whether or not you're going to trust the rope. Once you step off, only then does the rope prove what it can hold.

Once the Israelites started moving, God moved too – opening the Red Sea. Can you imagine this moment? This is one of those moments in history that I would've loved to have been there to see God show up/show out.

Point – the Christian life begin w/ listening for God to speak – then responding in faith to His leading. When we respond to His leading God always provides.

The key isn't getting ahead of God or deciding we're going to do something in Jesus' name that God may or may not want us to do. It's responding to His leading and then counting on God to show up. This requires developing a listening ear and a responsive will – so that we get on the same frequency w/ God.

To get on the same frequency w/ God, we have to be frequent w/ God in the Word, in worship, and in prayer.

There is a good chance some of us walked in today feeling like our lives are caught b/w a Pharaoh and a wet place. Something happened in your life you didn't expect and now you feel stuck. You can't move forward. You don't want to go back – and now you're asking: "How did I end up in the wrong line?"

Exodus 14 reminds us – ***God doesn't lead His people into dead ends but He leads them into dependence.***

Meaning – you're not stuck. You're being positioned.

So, when you find yourself b/w a Pharaoh and a wet place: Don't panic. Don't try to rewrite the story or attempt to move ahead w/out God. Remember who led you there. Stand firm. And when He speaks – move. B/c what looks like an unexpected interruption may be the very place God intended to display His power in your life for your good and His glory.