

Miracle by the Sea
Exodus 13:17-14:31

November 14, 2021

HDBC

In the Exodus story we are introduced to some great characters. Think about those whom we have already been introduced to.

Pharaoh – wicked, prideful tyrant who refused to listen to the voice of God
Shiphrah\Puah – courageous midwives who saved sons of Israel from infanticide.
Jochebed – mother of Moses who trusted God to protect her boy in the Nile.
Aaron – a man who was willing to play second-fiddle to Moses.
Moses – the reluctant leader who served as a shepherd to this human flock

These are all great characters, but none take top billing. That honor belongs to God, Himself. That has been true from the very beginning of this narrative and continues to be so as we now begin to examine the post-Egypt experience of the people. The first of those experiences involves a ***Miracle by the Sea!*** Consider five things this morning.

1. Need for a miracle (13:17-14:12)

What was it that brought them to a place where they needed a miracle by the sea? I see three things in the text. The first will be surprising for it involved them doing the right thing. Doing the right thing will not always keep us out of trouble. Sometimes it leads us right into trouble. But when it does, it is trouble that God plans to use for His glory and our good.

1) They trusted God

Let me show you the evidence that they were trusting God. 3 things.

First, they went where he told them to go. 13:17-18; 21-22

When they left Egypt they had a destination in mind. They were bound for the promised land, the land God had promised Abraham would belong to them. The coastal highway would have been the most direct route there. However, God led them in a different direction, the longer route. **Why?** To go the most direct route would have led them right into war with the Philistines. They were free but were not ready for battle. The time for war would come, but this was not that time, and God knew it. His direction may not always make sense to us, but it is best.

Second, they carried the bones of Joseph. (13:19)

I love this!. Joseph had instructed his sons to make sure that when they left Egypt they were to take his bones with them. He knew that Egypt was not his permanent home and did not want to be left behind. It was a reminder that God had been faithful to Joseph and to the promise made so many years before. Now, they were the beneficiaries of that promise. By taking the bones of Joseph they were acknowledging the God of Joseph was the same God who was leading them to freedom. Trust in the eternal God.

Third, they camped where God told them to camp. (14:1-2)

They had originally camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. Then God directed them to camp on the shores of the Red Sea. At the time that may not have seemed significant, but it would become so. The application for us is this. **We need to go where God tells us to go and we need to camp where God tells us to camp! Both require faith in God.**
Second reason they needed a miracle . . .

2) They were threatened by a fierce enemy (14:5-8)

Simply put, Pharaoh changed his mind, yet again. He assembled a great army and quickly set out to recapture the Hebrews and bring them back to Egypt. They had gone out with great wealth but they had not gone out with great weapons. Honestly, this would have been an easy victory for Pharaoh. He had the manpower and the weapons. And third . . .

3) They had no way of escape (10-12)

The sea was blocking their path forward and the enemy was blocking their path backward. **As J. Vernon McGee said, *These poor, defenseless people were caught between the Devil and the deep blue sea.***

They were in a tough spot, but they were there because God led them there. When you find yourself in a tough spot it may be because you have made some bad decisions. But sometimes it is because God has led you there so He can show you just how gracious and powerful He is.

2. Reassurance from Moses (14:13-14)

They not only cried out to God, but complained to Moses. I'm amazed at the tenacity and perseverance of this servant leader. He could have lashed back, but he did not. Instead, he offered great reassurance. He told them 3 things.

1) Don't be afraid (13)

Fear is our natural reaction when we are threatened. It is actually a God-given mechanism for our own protection. Fear, can be a good thing. However, there are times when are fear must be overcome by our faith in the **power, presence and promises** of God. When God steps in to become personally involved in our protection, we can put fear on the shelf.

2) Stand still and watch God (13)

Literally, *take your stand*. The idea is of positioning yourself so that you can see. Stand up, not to flee or fight, but to watch.

3) God will fight for us (14)

God is going into the game. God is always watching and is always governing. He is always in charge and ultimately controlling. However, there are times when He personally steps into the battle for us. In those cases we are not to do anything except watch, listen and trust Him. They had no idea at this point what God planned to do. But He had a plan.

1) The need for a miracle. 2) The reassurance of Moses.

3. Action of God (14:15-30)

Four things that God did.

1) He called for them to move forward (15)

Interesting response from God. Why are you praying, tell the people to start moving. He instructed them to move forward even before there was a way for them to move forward. **The call of God often comes before the way of God is clear. Our yes is not predicated on our ability to see the details.** It is based on our trust in the God who makes a way.

2) He stood in the gap to protect them (19-20)

He was in the cloud and the fire that had been leading them. Now he moves behind them, placing himself between them and the approaching threat. God is not only faithful to protect but He places Himself in the gap. Reminds me of what Jesus would later do for us. He would stand in the gap between us and the wrath we deserved.

3) He divided the water (21)

There is great misunderstanding of how this happened.

In the movies we see Moses lifting his staff and the waters part for the people to walk through. That was all true, but what you may have missed is that the wind that God used to part the water blew all night. Why? Maybe to dry the riverbed. Remember, they walked across on dry ground.

4) He confused and destroyed the enemy (24-30)

God confused their minds and messed with their chariots. The soldiers quickly realized that they were not simply chasing fugitive slaves but were chasing a mighty foe. God was working against them and they knew it. Once the Hebrews were safely on land and the Egyptians were between the walls of water, God called Moses to stretch out his staff once again. This time the water came crashing down, destroying them.

4. Lessons learned (14:31)

There were some lessons learned by the Hebrews.

They feared God

They trusted God

They trusted Moses

All three would be important lessons that would enable them to go forward as they faced other challenges. Unfortunately, they will also quickly forget them when they most need to rest in them. We'll see that as we continue our journey through the Exodus.

5. Our Takeaways

1) God always knows which way to go

The straight road is not always the best road.

The short road is not always the best road.

God's map is always better than **Google or Garmin**.

He can see things we cannot see. (Philistines)

He may want to teach us things, learned best on a difficult road.

He may want to use our experience to bring glory to His name.

He may want to use our experience to benefit others who watching us.

2) Tough spots for us are opportunities for God

Tough spots are only tough for us. They are not difficult for God. They are opportunities for Him to reveal just how mighty He is. Just have

faithful He is. Just how gracious He is. The next time you find yourself in a predicament, between a rock and a hard place, between the Devil and the deep blue sea, stand still and watch what God does.

Chesty Puller was a decorated U.S. Marine Corps officer. While in command of a large number of men in combat, he inadvertently moved into an area that was crawling with enemy. He realized his men were outnumbered and surrounded. To the north lay a platoon of the enemy, as well as on both flanks. To the rear, another company; all escape routes were closed off. What did Puller do? He tighten his fist and said, ***That's outstanding. They'll never get away this time!***

We live in a broken, sinful world that is influenced by a determined and organized enemy who are all around us. However, as light we are supposed to be surrounded by darkness. That's where the light is needed the most and where God always comes through.

3) **For God to get the glory, He must do the fighting**

Don't misunderstand, there are certainly times when God wants us to act. But there are also times when He wants us to wait and watch, while He does all the acting. **Charles Swindoll** wrote the following words in his personal journey.

When I panic, I run.

When I run, I lose.

When I lose, God waits.

When I wait, God fights.

When He fights, He wins.

When He wins, I learn.

The miracle by the sea is another picture of our **salvation in Jesus**.

The enemy is closing in. There is no way of escape. In His own power, God makes a way of escape.

The wrath of God, like the Egyptian army, was following, chasing, closing in. I had no way of escape. God stepped in and provided a way, through faith in Jesus. When I trusted Him, the waters opened and I was able to move from death to life.