Following God into the Unknown - Part Six

# Exodus 14.13-15.21

As we open the Word of God to the book of Exodus, we’re continuing our series Following God into the Unknown and we’ve been following Moses, but more specifically the people of God who’ve been living in captivity for 400 years in Egypt. And so, you could say, they haven’t really been living as the people of God for a long time, they’re not really worshiping God, but they have a distant memory of God. In other words, they knew about him, they saw enough evidence around them, and even though their understanding of God had been confused by their association with the Egyptians, they still had just a little bit of faith. And it was that little bit of faith that led them to call on God as they are stuck in this place, groaning under the oppression of their Egyptian slave masters.

You see, there’s nothing more frustrating than being stuck in a place or a position that you had nothing to do with. And so, the Israelites were serving Pharaoh just like their father did and their grandfather did, and so they’re working, they’re doing their best, but they’re getting nowhere. It’s not that they were being unfruitful, but it was a feeling of unfruitfulness which led to their frustration. They were feeling stuck, like they’d been kept from their potential, cut off from their purpose, and so even though they didn’t have a full understanding of who God was, they called upon his name, he heard them and sent Moses to deliver them.

Last week we saw Israel coming out of Egypt, or more literally, they were driven out of Egypt after a series of ten plagues. And so, the people of God had experienced a great miracle, a mighty deliverance from God, as the lamb was slain and the death Angel passed over. The Israelites came out rejoicing, full of joy because their dream of freedom had finally come true, but their joy was short-lived, because the Pharaoh changed his mind. When he realized what had happened, that he hadn’t thought this through, he hadn’t considered the consequences, he gathered his army together and they went in pursuit of the people of God.

I want you to begin to feel this because you won’t be able to appreciate their situation unless you understand the feeling of having left everything that’s familiar to you, being on the run, when suddenly you hear the hoofbeats of Pharaoh’s horses and chariots about to overtake you and you’re on foot. All of a sudden there is the sound of hoofbeats coming and the realization that you’re unprotected, hiking through the wilderness with your family, and so they’re overcome by fear and they begin cursing where they’re at and wishing they were back where they’d been.

In Exodus chapter 14, they said to Moses, “It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert” (Exodus 14:12). And in a split second their joy turned to mourning, they were overcome with anxiety, forgetting the great miracle of Exodus, forgetting the 400 years of oppressive slavery in Egypt, and they began thinking that they would’ve been better to die as slaves than to die in freedom in the desert. And yet that’s exactly what fear does, it causes you to lose focus, it distorts your perspective so that you don’t see things clearly, and if you’re not careful it can cause you to be stuck in the past instead of moving into the future.

This is where the Israelites were, they were cursing Moses because their perception of who was for them and who was against them was distorted. They were cursing the one who is trying to help them, they were ready to forfeit what God had in front of them because of their fear, but the Bible says that Moses encouraged them saying,

*“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13).*

Moses encourages them to stand firm, in spite of their circumstances; and that’s such a good reminder for us, because God is going to get some glory out of this whatever. Whatever your problem is, whatever your Pharaoh is, whatever hoofbeats are keeping you up at night, you will see the deliverance of the Lord. When the enemy is threatening you, your past is trying to overtake you, and you don’t know what to do or where to go. When you’re worried about what might happen, you can praise God because he’s going to get some glory out of this.

You see, it was with a mighty hand that God brought his people out of Egyptian slavery and I believe that was what was on the apostle Peter’s mind when he wrote to the Roman church. They were in a season of great persecution and he wanted these suffering Christians to know that the same hand of God that had been actively fulfilling his purpose throughout human history, was still reigning over their lives and so he says in first Peter, chapter 5,

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time…” (1 Peter 5:6).*

And so, Peter is reminding those who are under attack, those who are experiencing discouragement, depression, and anxiety, to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand, which is just another way of saying humble yourself under God’s mighty plan.

I don’t know about you, but I am so thankful for God’s mighty hand in my life because everything that I thought was better, is just so much less than God’s mighty plan. And that’s exactly what Moses is saying to the Israelites as they’re panicking because they hear hoofbeats coming. He’s encouraging them to trust God’s mighty hand, because it’s a strong hand, he will prevail, and his plan will come to pass. In fact, he declared,

*“I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).*

And so, when you don’t know what to do or know where to go, when you’re worried about what might happen, when the enemy is threatening your future and your past is trying to overtake you. I wonder if there’s anyone, maybe some of you, and all you can see is what people are doing to you? All you can see is what COVID-19 has done to your family, to your company, and you can hear the sound of hoofbeats, you can see Pharaoh’s army approaching, but will you humble yourself under God’s mighty hand? Can you hear what God is saying to you this morning and allowing him to change your perspective on what you’re experiencing, realizing that no matter what you see, feel, or hear, it’s God who controls your destiny, it’s God who’s overseeing the whole process. This is what Moses reminds us in verse 14, when he says,

*“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14).*

Last week, I said that if God brought you to it, he intends to bring you through it. And so, you need to remember that he didn’t do all the miracles, the signs and wonders, and the 10 plagues to abandon you now. We need to remind ourselves when the hoofbeats are about to overtake us, when the doubts and fears are raging in our minds, that God’s mighty hand is his mighty plan, and he didn’t bring us this far to abandon us on the shore the Red Sea. And so, you don’t need to be afraid of whatever it is you’re facing today, because God will not allow you to be overcome by that fear or concern. The problem is that some of you went home, you wanted to apply what you heard, you wanted to change, but your Pharaoh was chasing after you and by Thursday you were done. It had only been four days, but you gave up because you were literally trying to undo a lifetime of habits in four days.

And so, we find ourselves in transition, we’re in the gap between verse 14 and verse 15, where Moses answered the people and then the Lord said to Moses,

*“Why are you crying out to me” (Exodus 14:15)?*

And maybe you’ve noticed that God can be weak on giving details? You know, God told Moses to go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let my people go, but he didn’t mention the fact that Pharaoh was going to try to kill him when he does it. And so, now there are 600 of Pharaoh’s best chariots with horsemen and troops approaching and Moses looks back and then he looks up to God and says, “I didn’t sign up for this, I can’t do this.”

In fact, there may be some of you today who told God, “I didn’t sign up for this.” You know, you didn’t sign up for this stuff that’s happening in your life right now. You didn’t sign up for that disappointment, that failure, or that closure. But that’s exactly where Moses is, he cried out, he calls on God for help, and God does the strangest thing, he does absolutely nothing. Instead he says, "Why are you crying out to me?”

Now, that’s tough, that’s hard to preach, because I want to preach messages where you call upon God and he moves the mountains. You know, he makes a way where there is no way; but what do you do when you call on God and he doesn’t say what you want him to say, he doesn’t do what you want him to do, and it doesn’t even seem like he’s doing anything? Well, there is more, and so we’ve got to keep reading, because the power of God can only be seen if you move forward.

*The Lord said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground” (Exodus 14:15-16).*

In other words, the miracle is in the movement. You see, the enemy was trying to shut them down, leaving them paralyzed with fear, but God had a plan that would only work if they kept moving. He had something set up down the road that was going to solve their problem with Pharaoh, but they needed to be in the right place to activate his plan.

There are some of you today who hear the sound of hoofbeats approaching, the enemy is trying to paralyze you with fear, but you’ve got to keep moving because your miracle is in the movement, the power of God is in the movement. You see, so much has been said about what happened at the Red Sea, but you’ve got to get there in order for your miracle to happen. And so, the enemy wants to paralyze you, he doesn’t want you to make it to the Red Sea, because he knows everything has been prepared, God doesn’t need to do or say anything else, all the key players are in place.

*And so, the Israelites kept moving and when they got to the edge of the Red Sea the Bible says,*

*“Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left” (Exodus 14:21-22).*

Now, can you imagine the terror of this moment, Pharaoh’s army is behind you, the sea is in front of you, you’ve got your kids, maybe a newborn baby in your arms, you’re walking alongside of your parents or grandparents, and you’ve got all of your possessions? It’s in times like these, situations where something is chasing you, that allows you to connect with God in a deeper way. You see, many of us don’t really reach our potential until something is behind us, some situation or circumstance that you never would’ve asked for threatens to overtake you and helps to keep you moving.

The Bible says that they walked through on dry ground, they don’t even get their feet muddy, they just needed to keep moving. And the thing that’s really amazing about this passage is that they were never really in danger anyway. If you look back at verse 19, the Bible says that as they got closer to the Red Sea,

*“The angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long” (Exodus 14:19-20).*

And so, the Israelites were never in trouble, the Pharaoh couldn’t get to them because God had protected them.

Now, I don’t know who that’s for, but there’s somebody listening and you need to know that God’s already got it covered, you’re not in it by yourself, you’re not fighting by yourself, you’ve got backup. You see, God came between the armies of Egypt and Israel, and he protected them from their enemy as he was working. All night long he drove the sea back with a strong east wind and at just the right time, when the command was given, verse 22 says,

*“The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left” (Exodus 14:22).*

And so, they’re hurrying through, because this is scary, they’re moving along, they’ve got their baby in their arm, their mother walking beside them with all of their children, and there’s a wall of water on this side and a wall of water on that side. And I hope that you can sense the danger because all they can see is two walls of water, they can’t see over them, they can’t see anything holding them up, and yet the Bible says they all scurried through, they all passed through the sea.

However, there was one problem, or what seemed to be a problem, and that is that the Pharaoh’s horses and chariots followed them into the sea. But God had prepared Moses and in verse 26, he told him,

*“Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen — the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived” (Exodus 14:26-28).*

And so, the same God who made a way where there was no way, the same God that opens doors, is the same God who closes doors. I don’t know about you but I’m so thankful for the doors that God has shut, because if I’d got that position or done that procedure it might’ve killed me, but God shut the door. And it was that same staff in the hand of Moses that God used to deliver his people that he also used to drown their enemies in the Red Sea. It was just as God had promised them, “The Egyptians you see today you will never see again” (Exodus 14:13). And so, they began to praise him, and the Bible says in chapter 15, verse 20,

*“Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea” (Exodus 15:20-21).*

There are some of you today who need to get that in your spirit, you need to get that in your mind and in your heart, you need to get your praise on; because some of you, the enemy has been after you, you’ve been under attack, and you need to thank God, you need to praise him, because you’re not going to see them anymore. The Bible says that the people of God got tambourines and started dancing as their enemies were drowning.

I hope you’ll understand that victory isn’t always what you conquer later, it’s more about the movement, your victory is in the movement. You see, your victory is not in the moment when you finally throw the stone and take that giant down. David was victorious the moment he walked out onto the battlefield because victory isn’t just what happens in the future, victory is honoring God, being faithful and obedient today.

Consider our Savior Jesus Christ for a moment, he wasn’t just victorious when he gave his life on the cross and God raised him from the dead. He was victorious in the garden when he fell with his face to the ground and prayed,

*"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me…" (Matthew 26:39).*

As every demonic voice of hell said don’t do it, it’s not worth it, you’ll never make it, Jesus was victorious the moment he said,

*“…Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39).*

You see, he kept moving even when he was tried in a false trial, stripped naked and beaten, abused and nailed to a cross. Even hanging there on the cross, he was mocked and abused as people spat on him, but he was victorious as he looked up to heaven and said,

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).*

Even in his last dying breath Jesus was victorious because he was victorious every day. It wasn’t just in the moment he gave his life, but in every day, ordinary days, because he was faithful and obedient. He gave his life to pay the price for our sin, God raised him from the dead and he was victorious. The Bible says,

*“He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross” (Colossians 2:14-15, NLT).*

As we close, I want you to consider what is your Pharaoh? What is the battle that you are facing today? Whatever it is, you need to know that the Lord will fight for you; with the help and the power of God you can win that battle. And so, right now, in your mind, I want you to name your battle. I want you to identify it, I want you to call it out, because you’re going to defeat it in Jesus name. God said, “Keep moving.”

For some of you it’s time to take care of your body, others of you it’s a debt to eliminate, others of you are spiritually passive, and others of you have been getting crushed in a very private, lust filled battle, robbing you of what you really want in life, stripping you of the confidence to walk victoriously in Christ.

And so, I want to encourage you to get moving today, because you don’t win the battle years from now, but you conquer it today. You win when you lose that 25 pounds, you win when you pay off that credit card, you win when you get in God’s Word daily, and you win when you confess your sins to someone and are set free. You win when you say I’m not going to see this enemy anymore. You win when you say I refuse to be trapped a moment longer. And you can do it, if you’re in Christ, you have what it takes, because the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is dwelling within you. And so, you are more than a conqueror.

Let’s pray together.

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