

FEAR NOT! STAND FIRM!**Exodus 13:17-14:31**

Intro: This is a favorite Bible story for me. From my earliest memories I have listened to this account and my imagination would paint images in my mind that fascinated me. For instance when I looked at my Bible Story Book and saw a picture of a kid throwing a stone into a wall of water like this Israelite kid I almost envied him the experience. I'm also quite certain there was a movie or two that fueled my mind's eye as well.

But it was more than just good story telling – it really happened. An oppressed and terrified people were pursued by an oppressive and evil regime and God delivered them. Not only that, he taught them they could count on him – and that no matter what they should fear not and stand firm. Through it all they learned God is as good as his word and his word is very good.

So let's look at it. Now, since these are extensive texts, I'm not going to have them on the screen. If you don't have your Bible with you or on your smart phone, listen in as I read. . .

(Read Exodus 13:17-14:4)

God led his people

- The logical way was not the best way. The logical and direct route was right past Egyptian military outposts. The long wilderness route seemed crazy, but they probably didn't know this. Here's a good point, when we don't understand what God is up to, we will know in the end and it will be good. F. B. Meyer says, *"Patience and faith are still severely tested by the circuitous and laborious route, but when in the afterwards we understand God's reasons, we are satisfied."*
- Plain and simply for the Israelites AND for us, God will lead us into the unknown and he will take care of us. But we have to follow to find out.
- The Lord went before them. He showed the way with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It was fairly obvious – they were being led by God. So even though God's way seems like wilderness but it's the best way God shows the way- it seems dangerous, but he's leading, so we need to follow.
- And it gets better. Listen . . .
- (Read Exodus 14:5-14)

The Lord will fight for you

- The Egyptians second guessed. Oops! Why did we let them go?!?! They did a lot of our work. They were good workers and free! Let's go get them back. The Egyptians from Pharaoh on down were slow learners – but they learned fast and furious.
- The Israelites second guessed. And they cried out to God. Their cry is so classically Jewish in its almost humorous exaggeration, listen, *They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?"* Exodus 14:11 But David Guzik writes, *"The children of Israel cried out to the LORD: Israel did the right thing. When we find ourselves in dangerous places with no easy escape, we must cry out to God, because God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). And G. Campbell Morgan writes, "The panic of the people is hardly to be wondered at when we think of their circumstances."*
 - So we shouldn't be too hard on them – after all, we'd probably be crying out to God too – with a lot of fear in our voices. Davie Napier writes, *"More important in the narrative is the fact that in the midst of this highly tentative, terrifying, panic prone venture of faith, the loud wail of unfaith is sounded. Our freedom to serve God, so they reasoned, is only a dim possibility; the continued pursuit of that freedom means the irrevocable renunciation of all the aspects of security we have ever known. We cannot face the quest of freedom in God's service, even for God's sake when, in the course of the quest, we are propelled into an existence that is a vacuum, devoid of all the symbols of security—ground to walk on, means of subsistence, and some reasonable assurance of continuity. Let us go back to Egypt. Let us return to life and meaning tangibly supported by human means and human devices- even though they be Egyptian! It is a fundamental cry, this wail of unfaith. And no man may sit in judgment on it, since every man's life of faith is tormented by the same essential cry. This is precisely why this narrative of the Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan claims the attention of succeeding generations of those who, in varying kind*

and degree, espouse the life of faith. This is the story of every man's tentative, terrifying, panic prone venture of faith!"

- Moses said "You just watch!" Moses's response to Israel's despair was stated in three verbs, each in its own way either commanding or entreating Israel to a particular course of action. Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work. He reckoned confidently on the salvation of God. All the Israelites had to do, in the first instance, was to stand still and see it. It is hard to stand still when the situation becomes acute. If you don't know what to do, stand still until you do; it is God's business to direct and defend the believing soul. Let God do the fighting. He was saying, *"Don't just do something, stand there!"*
- In Acts 7. Stephen was telling the history of God's people, and God's Deliverance of his people, and he talked about an angel who was the Lord. Lord. F. B. Meyer says that *"God always puts himself between us and our strong enemies. The ordinary man puts circumstances between himself and God, but the consecrated soul inserts God between himself and the circumstances. When God says forward, he will open the path and lead his people as a shepherd leads his flock, by way they know not."*
- As God placed himself between his people and the terror that pursued them, the Israelites and their pursuers saw him in action. Listen . . .
- (Read Exodus 14:15-31)

And they believed in the Lord

- First, a quick aside: God keeps his promises. We should too! (Joseph's bones - Explain)
- Now they need to get busy and do something. Start marching!
- They ALL believed in the Lord, the Israelites AND the Egyptians.
- Yes, that's water you see blocking your way – go forward anyway.
- The Egyptians will know I'm the Lord – and they did. Listen *And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."* Exodus 14:25
- It was a greater miracle than we can imagine. If you have ever spent just a little time studying this part of the Exodus, you know that there are many a varied theories about how this happened, if it ever happened. There is also legitimate evidence that it was not the Red Sea the Israelites crossed but the Sea of Reeds. Regardless – the Israelites crossed an impassable body of water on dry ground and then the Egyptian army was swamped, drowned and wiped out when the waters closed in on them. Can we just accept that God can do whatever he wants with his creation? He can and he does. So while we can conjecture all day long about how it was done and where it was, the truth is the Lord saved Israel!
 - That being said I have this fun story, which, even if it is apocryphal, as it probably is, the truth is all through it. I Googled the story to make sure I got it right, and here it is. *"A little boy learned about the parting of the Red Sea in Sunday School from his very liberal, skeptical Sunday School teacher. After church, when his dad asked him what he had learned that day, the little boy replied that they had learned about the awesome miraculous power of God, who brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage by leading them through a stretch of six-inch-deep water. "What's so miraculous about that?" asked the dad. His son replied, "What's so amazing and miraculous is that God drowned the whole Egyptian army in six inches of water!"*
- Regardless of how this all happened, and we don't have video, although we do have a relatively detailed account of the sea parting, and the Israelites going across on dry land, and then the Egyptians following them in and their chariot wheels being clogged which insinuates that it was mud that they ran into, the truth is here and can be summarized five words THE LORD SAVED ISRAEL.

Conclusion: Yes, the Lord save Israel that day

We need to remind ourselves, when we run up against adversity. We should fear not, we should stand firm and fast, and then realize that he's fighting our battles. God's got this! Amen.