

Victory
September 24, 2017
Allen Power

Exodus 14:13-28

Life can be a battle – no matter how peaceably you try to live your life, there WILL be battles. There will be times when something or someone has you stuck between the “devil and the deep blue sea.” It’s possible that your enemy is another human being, but it’s unlikely that any of us was chased to church this morning by the Egyptian army. Most of the enemies we battle are not people but circumstances. **What are some of the “enemies” we might have to battle? What/who is ‘public enemy #1’ that causes all of our battles?**

Big Idea: No matter who or what your enemy is, God will fight for you and WIN that battle. Don’t be afraid. Stand still, stay calm, and watch Him work for you.

- The terror of the tenth plague (death of Egypt’s firstborn males) caused Pharaoh to relent and set the children of Israel free.
- God didn’t lead the Israelites along the main road, the shortest route. That road might have put them in a battle with the Philistines.
- Instead God led them in a “round about” way toward the Red Sea. He guided them by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.
- It looked like a “clean getaway” until God told Moses: *“Stop and camp here so Pharaoh will think you are lost and come after you.”* What!? *“I’m hardening his heart so he’ll chase you.”* Why!? *To display my glory to him, his army, and my people, then everyone will know I am the LORD!*
- So the LORD gave Pharaoh second thoughts. The economic realities of releasing these slaves caused Pharaoh to say: *“What have we done?”* (14:5) Verse eight tells us *“The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh...so he chased after the people of Israel.”*

- Let's pause for a fundamental question: after God had delivered His people from Egypt, **why would He purposely cause Pharaoh to come after them? What does verse 14:4 say? What lesson can we learn?**

Chuck Swindoll writes:

"The people of Israel came to this impasse...at God's direction. Their predicament wasn't an accident. It wasn't a wrong turn. It wasn't a miscalculation. He knew they needed the Red Sea experience to learn some things from Him. And this was one of those valuable lessons they needed to learn early in their journey."

- TRUTH: There are no random situations with God. He orchestrates events so He can demonstrate how He works things for our good and His glory.
- The Israelites stopped and made camp. No doubt they were laughing, singing, and celebrating how God delivered them. But Moses knew better.
- Just then they noticed that every chariot available in Egypt was coming their way. The people panicked! *"Moses, why on earth did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness! We knew something like this would happen! Let's start waving our white flags and go back to the slave life in Egypt!"*

Exodus 14:13–28 (NLT)

¹³ But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. ¹⁴ The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

- In fairness to the Israelites we can understand why they panicked and were even willing to go back to slavery in Egypt. It was all they had ever known! All of them had been born into that life.
- Verses thirteen and fourteen are really the point of this lesson. We know the rest of the story, we saw the movie, and we could just stop here. But let's read on and we'll come back to verses thirteen and fourteen.

Escape through the Red Sea

¹⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! ¹⁶ Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground.

- Let’s pause again and notice verse fifteen. **Why were God’s instructions counter-intuitive to what we think a godly person should do when faced with a dilemma? What can we learn from that verse?**
- TRUTH: It’s ALWAYS appropriate and necessary to turn to God in prayer. It’s not appropriate to turn prayer into procrastination. When God has told us what to do we need to adjourn the prayer meeting and GET GOING.

¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after the Israelites. My great glory will be displayed through Pharaoh and his troops, his chariots, and his charioteers. ¹⁸ When my glory is displayed through them, all Egypt will see my glory and know that I am the Lord!”

- Again, verse eighteen repeats the point the LORD has made over and over again in Exodus: everything He does is to display His glory so everyone will know that He is the LORD.

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to the rear of the camp. The pillar of cloud also moved from the front and stood behind them. ²⁰ The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night.

- God puts a barrier between the Egyptians and the Israelites. Another display that God is orchestrating events even when we’re under attack.

²¹ Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the Lord opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. ²² So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

²³ Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and charioteers—chased them into the middle of the sea. ²⁴ But just before dawn the Lord looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their forces into total confusion. ²⁵ He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. “Let’s get out of here—away from these Israelites!” the Egyptians shouted. “The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!” ²⁶ When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the Lord said to Moses, “Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers.” ²⁷ So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the Lord swept them into the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

- This scripture always raises the question: do you really believe God parted the sea and they escaped on dry land? I do! But, is that the real question?
- I think the real question for a follower of Christ is, do you believe God CAN part the sea? Do you believe the God of the universe can do whatever is necessary to deliver His children from anything or anyone attacking them?
- Let’s go back to verses thirteen and fourteen. **Look at those verses and let’s list the instructions Moses gave the people. What are they?**
- If you take out your Bible app and do a search you will find that the instruction “*do not be afraid*” occurs over and over (33 times in the ESV.)
- One commentator says, “*The counsel “do not fear” occurs 365 times in the Bible...giving us one for every day of the year.*”ⁱⁱ
- Over and over in scripture God tells us, “Don’t be afraid.” When we are between “the devil and the deep blue sea” and don’t know how we will survive, God’s first instruction is: “Don’t be afraid.”
- The question for you and me is: Do I trust Him enough to embrace that?

- **It's been said that "fear and faith cannot exist together." Do you think that's true? Why?** (Some reading on this: <https://goo.gl/wa4M52>)
- We might say: "I can't help it, when I'm afraid I just can't muster up the faith to overcome my fears!" **Is that how it works? Do we have to "muster up faith?" Why?**
- One author writes, "...*faith is not something that we can produce in ourselves. Faith is a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9) and is described as a fruit (or characteristic) which is produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The Christian's faith is a confident assurance in a God who loves us, who knows our thoughts and cares about our deepest needs. That faith continues to grow as we study the Bible and learn the attributes of His amazing character. The more we learn about God, the more we can see Him working in our lives and the stronger our faith grows.*"ⁱⁱⁱ
- Next in Exodus 14:13, Moses told them to "stand still." Turn to Psalm 46.
- In Psalm 46:10 (ESV) God tells us:¹⁰ *"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"*
- Look at the first three verses of Psalm 46. Verse 7: God is our fortress!
- Back to Exodus 14:13: Don't be afraid; stand still; and watch God work.
- When we're in trouble our natural tendency is to give into the chaos. God says slow down and pay attention because I want you to see how I'm using this terrible situation to show you my glory.
- Wouldn't it be a shame to miss what God is doing for us? We need to watch Him work and then recall how many times He has rescued us.
- Finally, look at verse fourteen. Moses reassured them with these words: *"The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."*
- Illustration: Mike Martin, FSU baseball coach/Exodus 14:14^{iv} (<https://goo.gl/SwEhoK>)
- Isn't it encouraging to know that the God of the universe has promised to fight your battles for you?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Battles are a fact of life. God uses the battles we face to prove that He loves us and will work every situation out for our good and His glory.
- Because battles are a fact of life, we have to know what to do in a battle.
- Moses delivered our battle instructions straight from God.
- God's first instruction is, "Don't be afraid."

In his book "Fearless" Max Lucado writes:

"Fear never wrote a symphony or poem, negotiated a peace treaty, or cured a disease. Fear never pulled a family out of poverty or a country out of bigotry. Fear never saved a marriage or a business. Courage did that. Faith did that. People who refused to consult or cower to their timidities did that. But fear itself? Fear herds us into a prison and slams the doors. Wouldn't it be great to walk out? Imagine your life wholly untouched by angst. What if faith, not fear, was your default reaction to threats? If you could hover a fear magnet over your heart and extract every last shaving of dread, insecurity, and doubt, what would remain? Envision a day, just one day, absent the dread of failure, rejection, and calamity. Can you imagine a life with no fear? This is the possibility behind Jesus' question. "Why are you afraid?" (Matt. 8:26 NCV)^v

- The only way to overcome fear is to grow our faith. We don't create faith.
- Our faith is a gift of God given through His Holy Spirit.
- That explains how calm and strong some of God's children are in a crisis. It's not THEM, it's the Holy Spirit living in them.
- If we've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, we have His Spirit living in us to strengthen us. His Spirit gives us faith and we grow that faith through time in His word and paying attention to How He has rescued us in the past.
- Remember: No matter who or what your enemy is, God will fight for you and WIN that battle.
- Don't be afraid. Stand still, stay calm, and watch Him work for you.

ⁱ Charles R. Swindoll, *A Man of Selfless Dedication Moses* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999). Hunt, Josh. *Question Based Bible Study Guide -- Exodus Leviticus: Good Questions Have Groups Talking* (Kindle Locations 900-905). Good Question Publishing. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ Hunt, Josh. *Question Based Bible Study Guide -- Exodus Leviticus: Good Questions Have Groups Talking* (Kindle Locations 969-970). Good Question Publishing. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/faith-vs-fear.html>

^{iv} Tony Dungy and Nathan Whitaker, *Strengthening Your Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2014).

^v Max Lucado, *Fearless: Imagine Your Life without Fear* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).