

THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD'S HAND

Moses - Part 8

Exodus 13,14

Scripture Reading: Psalm 20 (verse 6)

Intro: I am not an authority on world history, but I think that I can safely say that there never has been an event in history equal to what the Lord did when He delivered the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. Humanly speaking Israel was no match for the great power of Egypt. The Pharaoh who was in power during the years that the Lord had brought judgment upon Egypt, not only survived those plagues, as terribly devastating as they were, had told Moses that if he ever saw him again, Moses would die. But what Pharaoh really did not reckon on was that his conflict was with the living God of heaven and earth, not with His servants, Moses and Aaron, nor with the people of Israel.

The next order of business was for the Lord to do what He had told Moses that He would do from the beginning of their conflict, and that was the death of the firstborn. And so He did it. Verses 29 and 30 of Exodus 12 tell us this: (Read Ex. 12:29-30.) And, as a result, Pharaoh told them to get out because he and the Egyptians were afraid that all of them might be killed.

So they went – a company of very probably a million and a half to two million people. The exodus is what we are told about in Exodus 12. It is a most amazing story, a story that people even today are familiar with even though approximately 3500 years have gone by since it took place. And there aren't many events in history that have that place of prominence in people's minds today.

In the first part of chapter 13 we are told that this deliverance was to be commemorated every year in the observance of the Passover followed for the next week in the feast of unleavened bread. They were to teach their children the meaning of the Passover, and when they asked about it, their parents were to tell them. The record of it was to be worn as a memorial on their foreheads and upon their hands. And it was always to be remembered that the firstborn son and even the firstborn of the animals belonged to the Lord. This occupies the first 16 verses of Exodus 13.

But I want you to notice an expression that is repeated through these verses. It tells us in an unmistakable way how this all happened. Was it

because the appeals of Moses and Aaron finally broke down Pharaoh's opposition so that he let the people go? No! Was it that the Israelites rose up in rebellion against the Egyptians, and set themselves free? Again we have to say, No. What was it? Read the last part of verse 3. Then read the last part of verse 9. Then read the latter part of verse 14. And then read the last part of verse 16.

In all of these verses, to show how important it was, we are told that "the hand of the Lord" did it. Or, as in verse 9, "with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt." The hand referred to like this, whether it be the hand of a king, or the hand of God, or the hand of anyone else, is an expression of power! In Exodus 6:1 we read this which was the Lord's prediction about what Pharaoh would eventually do. In that verse we read,

Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land (Ex. 6:1).

We know from reading the record in Exodus 12 that the stronger hand of the Lord prevailed upon the strong hand of Pharaoh so that Pharaoh did what he really did not want to do.

However, it is one thing to get the children of Israel out of Egypt, but it is another thing to get them to Canaan, the promised land. But the Lord never makes up His mind as He goes along. He had long before, as far back as we need to go, determined what means of guidance He would give His people.

And so, from verse 17 in chapter 13 to the end of the chapter, we see:

I. THE LORD'S PROMISE OF GUIDANCE (Ex. 13:17-22).

Notice first:

A. The direction He led them (vv. 17-18).

B. What Moses took with him (v. 19).

C. How He led the people (vv. 20-22).

Be sure to notice that the guidance was constant, day and night. Notice also that the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, were

more than just inanimate objects going before the people. They were manifestations of the Lord's presence. It was the Lord Who was guiding them by day and by night. It was there constantly by day and night, reminding them of the presence of the Lord, but never for even a moment leaving them without the guidance that they needed.

What wonderful truth there is in this for us, when it comes to the subject of guidance. In Isaiah 58:11 we have God's promise to Judah in these words: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat they bones: and thou shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." In John 10:4 we read these words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."

So the Lord does not just guide us when we are facing some crisis. He does that, but He does more than that. He is always guiding us. We don't always follow His guidance, but His guidance is there. He guides us by His Word, but He guides us in ordering our circumstances. And He guides us Himself.

But as we move on to chapter 14 we have a problem (or, at least it looks like we do). It has to do with:

II. WHERE THE LORD GUIDED THEM (Ex. 14:1-9).

Notice the word "by the sea" in verse 2, and you find them again in verse 9. It looked like the Lord had led them into a trap. And at the same time in Egypt Pharaoh and his servants were rebuking themselves because they had let the children of Israel go. So, knowing where they had gone, Pharaoh took six hundred chariots with captains in each one, and they started out to capture the Israelites and to bring them back home. And we can be sure (although the Word does not say this) that Moses and Aaron would have been marked out for immediate death.

Often we don't understand the Lord's leading in our lives. Instead of being led, we often feel misled because we do not know what the Lord is doing. They were in a situation where they would be helpless victims of whatever the Egyptians wanted to do with them. But we get an idea from verse 4. We are not told that the Lord said this to Moses, and that he told the Israelites what we learn from verse 4. In view of the reaction of the

people, I would be inclined to say that neither Moses nor the people knew this. And even if they did, they would have been greatly puzzled as to how the Lord was going to show them that He was the Lord.

But the Egyptians pursued them, and found them camping by the Red Sea, and probably with huge cliffs on each side of them. And so there was no way for the Israelites to escape.

Next we have:

III. THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE (Ex. 14:10-12).

Moses and Aaron were going to be in this position many times in the next forty years, but this was the first one. It had to be very hard on them. If the attitude of the majority is the way we determine the will of God, then Moses and Aaron were completely in the minority. Many of the people had obviously been skeptical about leaving Egypt anyway, and when it appeared that everything had gone wrong, they were not slow about telling Moses and Aaron that they had been right, and that they were wrong. Unbelief prevailed among the Israelites.

IV. THE FAITH OF MOSES (Ex. 14:13-14).

Moses and Aaron were not beginners in knowing that they could trust the Lord although they probably did not know at this point how the Lord was going to help them. But they obviously knew that the Lord was going to help them. So Moses wisely told the people not to do anything, but to stay where they were and wait to see what the Lord would do. Moses was sure that this would be the last that they would see of Pharaoh and his army.

V. THE COMMAND OF THE LORD (Ex. 14:15-18).

The children of Israel were about to see something that had never been seen before. The Lord told Moses to tell the people to go forward, that he should take his rod, stretch out his rod over the sea, and the Lord would divide the waters so they could go through on dry ground.

I took our Encyclopedia and looked up the Red Sea. I learned that it is about 1400 miles long, and at its widest point is 210 miles wide. The average depth is 1,765 feet, and at its deepest spot is 9,974 feet. The

square footage of the Red Sea is about equal to the State of California.

Those are the measurements of the Red Sea today. There could be some variation from what it was 3,500 years ago, but the difference would not be that much. But notice that the Lord told Moses that He was going to open the way for the children of Israel to pass through “the midst of the sea.” Now I don’t know if that means at the central point north and south, but that is what the language sounds like. Regardless of how the dimensions may differ between then and now, we can be sure that the Lord did what would have been incomprehensible to the Israelites and to the Egyptians who must have felt that there was no way that Israelites could get away from them. We don’t know how wide the pathway through the Red Sea was, but it must have been that the wall of water on each side of them was several hundred feet high! And the Lord did two things in opening a pathway through the Red Sea. He opened the Sea up, holding the water back on each side, *but He also dried the river bed so that the children of Israel could walk surefootedly through the river. It was a most amazing miracle.* And it took real faith to go through the river.

Notice that the Lord repeated His purpose in verse 18.

What happened?

VI. CROSSING THROUGH THE RED SEA (Ex. 14:19-31).

A. What the angel of God did (vv. 19-20).

This had to be, not an angel, but a Member of the Godhead, probably our Lord.

B. What Moses did (v. 21).

C. What the children of Israel did (v. 22).

D. What the Egyptians *tried to do* (vv. 23-27).

And we could add, Why they failed. See vv. 26 and 27.

VII. THE CONCLUSION (Ex. 14:28-31).

The Egyptians died – all of them! The children of Israel lived. The last

two verses of the chapter make it clear that even though Moses was the Lord's instrument in this great deliverance, yet the One Who really did it, and so the One Who deserved all of the glory, was not Moses, but the Lord!

Concl: Scholars have tried to explain the miraculous nature of this event, saying the Israelites actually crossed through marshy lands to the north of the Red Sea. But they cannot explain how the whole Egyptian army died if the Israelites went through marshes instead of the Red Sea. For those of us who know anything about the power of God, we know that the story as it appears in the Bible is absolutely true, and its messages for us today are entirely reliable.

We learn from this that hand of the Lord is strong enough to meet the needs of His people regardless how impossible a situation may be. Nations have power, but God's power is always greater.

We learn that God is always partial to His people even though they may show themselves to be completely undeserving. This is not only a wonderful story of the power of God, but also of the grace of God.