

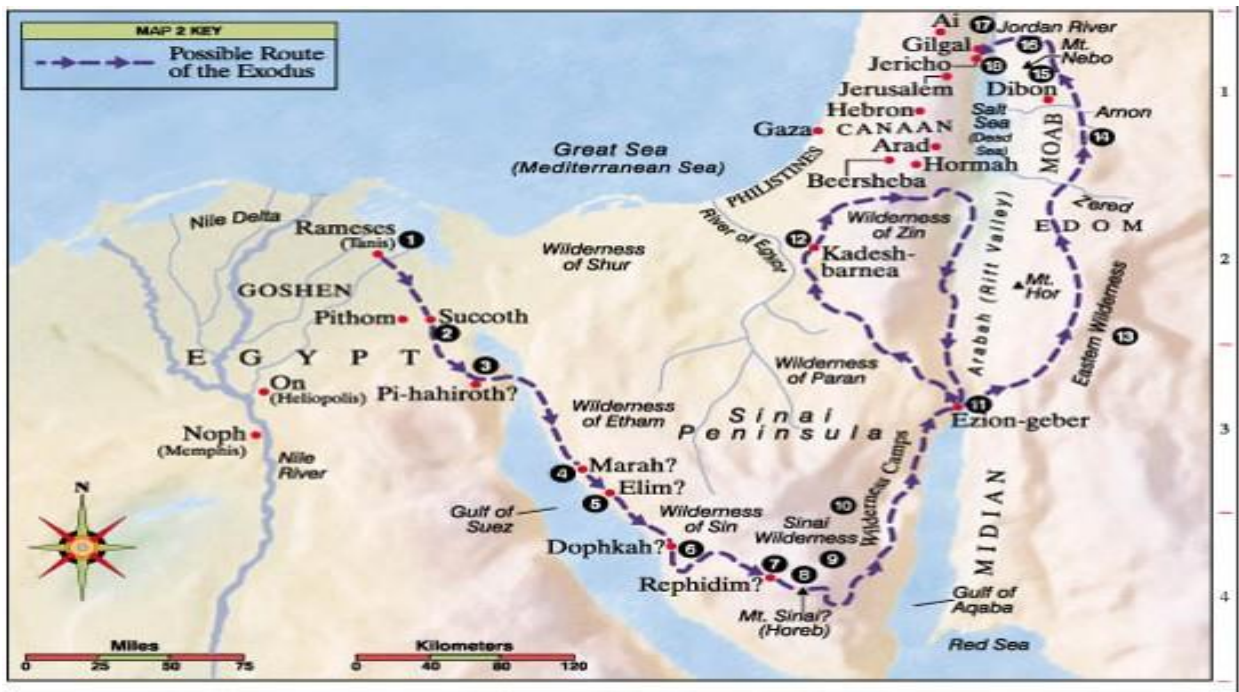
THE JOURNEY OF LIFE! Part 2

(Scripture: Exodus 14:10-14)

Introduction:

This passage is one of the best passages of the Scripture! In this passage, God makes a way for Israelites to pass through the sea. I still get goose bumps when I see this scene in the Ten Commandments movie. There is no such thing called dead end for a Christian! We always march forward as a good Christian soldier. Nothing can stop us if we are in God's will! God's ways can be mysterious. God sometimes bring us to a dead end so that He May show His miraculous power. God did just that for Israel.

Ex. 14:1, 2. 1Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2“Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.



Water map in those days were totally different! They had water everywhere! Now we see only traces of water. We do not know where Egyptians had abundant water. Israelites moved from Succoth and came down to the left side of what we call as Gulf of Suez. The Israelites came to the edge of the Sinai wilderness, but now they were walking along south where there was still greenery. God takes us through unknown path. It may not be green pastures always. Just follow His path! God gives the reason why He forced Israelites to come to this city!

Exodus 14: 3, 4. 3“For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, ‘They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ 4“Thus I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

This move was a bait for Pharaoh. Lord warned Moses that he will come after them. Pharaoh must have been seething in anger. Bunch of slaves stood against him and ran away by the help of some unknown God? Now he would hear the news that they have stopped by the wilderness, and are trapped near the water. He must have thought that this was a great opportunity. It would be easy for him to round them up and bring back these rebellious Hebrews. He had forgotten so fast about the horrible Passover of the Lord. His heart became hardened again! God said that He will be honored (glorified) through Pharaoh!

Exodus 14:5-9. 5When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" 6So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; 7and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. 8The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. 9Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

Pharaoh behaved just as the Lord spoke. He wanted the slaves back. Life without the slaves was too brutal for him. Just imagine, how horrible this Pharaoh was! Those Israelites came in because of famine to Egypt 430 years ago. They were such a great blessing for Egypt. But the Egyptians wanted more of their service, and they forced the Israelites as slaves! It can happen to any country. Germany hated Jews so much, they started executing them. If the white supremacists take over USA with their guns, I will not be surprised if all the colored people are put back in forced labor in no time. If India becomes complete Hindu countries, Christian minorities may become harijans and become forced laborers, (if they manage to survive and live!). We live in a highly explosive precarious time. Beware of the racists of any color. They will use politics, religion, and lies to control other races. Pharaoh and his people could not let the Israelites go. The Egyptians wanted them back too. They had enjoyed a very comfortable life because of these slaves! So it was a chance for Pharaoh to get his popularity back from the utter humiliation. Pharaoh gathered all his army and chased Israelites, and caught up with them. Now the Israelites could see them coming toward them. The Israelites thought that they lost them for good. No! But this time they were with bigger army!

It teaches us a valuable lesson also. When we think we won against our enemy devil that is when he may show up at our door with much more force, and intensity. This happens to ex alcoholics and druggies. When they think that they got victory over such dangerous habits that will over power them and push them down! When we think we had gotten out of debt, a bigger debt may try to overpower us. That is the time to pray and trust in the Lord. **But instead of looking toward God, the Israelites started complaining!**

Exodus 14:10-12. 10As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. 11Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? 12"Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

Here we go! We'll start hearing their murmurs and grumbling now onwards. This was the second time Israelites started murmuring. First time they did that when Pharaoh increased their work load in Egypt.

Now They started shouting at Moses! Didn't we say, leave us alone? It would have been better to serve as slaves than to die in the wilderness. To be honest, we would have all felt that way too!

Exodus 14:13, 14. 13But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. 14"The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

Here Moses gives the Words of comfort in few words. He was indeed a man of few words! The first message he spoke was "Don't be afraid! In other words, don't lose your cool, don't panic. The second message for Israel was stand still or stand firm. NASB says Stand by, but stand by word could mean "hold on" also and it brings out ambiguity in that command. I like the KJV translation here. Stand still! Don't run away. Hold your ground and stand firm (NIV) courageously. In other words, you just stand still and see the salvation of God! You don't have to do anything. The Lord will fight for you while you keep quiet! You hold your peace while the Lord fights for you. Moses guaranteed them that this will be the last time they will ever see the Egyptians!

God is telling us the same thing. Stand still. Some of us are anxious. We want to hang up everything and go back to India. But God is saying stand still. Some of you, you are sick of your job, and you want to move on. But God is saying, stand still. You stand still while God takes care of your future plan. Until God forces you to move somewhere, you stand still and wait for His action. This is more like a military command. You stay in your position until you are told to move or forced to move. You keep your eyes wide open and see what is going to happen next! When God promises that He will deliver, your prayer of supplication stops, and your prayer turns into victory chants, praises, and Thanksgiving! We trust Him so much, it turns into rejoicing prayer. Your prayers at that time turns into thanks giving. In quietness and trust we will find real strength. Psalmist always says, wait on the Lord quietly. We tend to panic and run around with fear. Leave your problem in the hands of God, and stand still, and be quiet and see with your own eyes how God handles your problem. But in this particular incident, we would all panic! This was a moment of end of life. Death was squarely staring at the faces of Israelites! But even at that moment we must stand still and allow our God to fight our battle. Just like how Daniel handled himself in Lion's den. How those brave men, Shadrac, meshak, abed nego handled the situation when they were thrown in the fire!

Exodus 14:15-18. 15Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. 16"As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. 17"As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18"Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen."

Moses encouraged the Israelites so well, but now he was panicking deep inside and crying unto the Lord. Aren't we preachers like that? We preach for everyone to exercise faith, and tell them to trust in the Lord, but when we go through similar situations, we start crying, we start panicking! If preachers don't demonstrate faith in their own personal life, it is time they step down. God rebuked Moses for

crying out loud. He told Moses to tell the Israelites to move forward? Move forward? Where? There was water in front of them!

We may be sitting at a dead end in our life, but yet God commands us to be still and keep moving forward to that dead end!

God is telling this church to move forward. Don't sit on your hands. Move forward with your Holy living. Move forward with your faith, hope, and, love. Move forward with your good works, and kindness! Move forward with the assurance of God's promises! The assurance is that gates of hell cannot prevail over us.

Now the Israelites were told to go toward the water. Is God going to send some cruise ships to save the Israelites? No, but God had His own plan, and He shared it with Moses!

He told Moses to lift up his staff, and stretch out his hands over the sea, and divide it.

Sometimes, God may tell us to plant a church, or start a mission project. It may look like we are doing it, but it is God who brings everything in line. If God does not build our church, all our effort is in vain.

Moses was given a promise here! The Israelites shall go through the midst of the sea on a dry land! But God did not fight against Egyptians and pushed them back or chased them away. Instead, he encouraged them to move forward also to attack the Israelites! It was God's will that both the Israelites and the Egyptians should move forward! Sometimes our prayers lead to more intensified conflict only! The situation may become worse! He told Moses that His name will be honored and glorified through these Egyptians.

Exodus 14:19-20. 19The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. 20So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

Now God was in action! The angel of God, and the pillar of God, moved behind the Israelites, and they stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The cloud on the Egyptians side was full of darkness, and they could not see or move much. But the cloud on the Israelites side gave light for Israelites! It was the same pillar of cloud and fire. But it was utter darkness, gloominess for the wicked, but the same cloud was a bright light for the righteous, and the wicked comprehended it not! Spiritually speaking, the righteous will always carry the manifestation of that light in their heart in the form of Holy Spirit, but others will stumble in darkness without that Light giving Spirit! The children of light will rejoice and say, If God is for us who can be against us! On the other hand, the children of darkness will face wrath. They will be thinking, it is a terrible thing to fall in the hands of the Lord! The cross brings light of grace to the righteous, but for the wicked, it is nothing but darkness, gloomy, and an emblem of condemnation. The Gospel is a sweet fragrance to the righteous, but for the wicked, it is a stench of death and pit of darkness! We can see this difference right here in this story.

Exodus 14:21, 22. 21Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. 22The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

In the meantime, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea started parting. God sent a strong east wind, (a tornado?) that split the sea into two parts, and the wind dried the parted path inside the sea quickly! There is no such thing called “dead end” in God’s vocabulary. Nothing can separate us from Him! The Israelites walked through the sea, and the sea stood like a wall on both sides of them.

Exodus 14:23-25. 23Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. 24At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. 25He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians.”

Now God allowed the Egyptians to chase the Israelites. Note vs. 25. God made the wheels to swerve and made them drive with difficulty! Soon the Egyptians realized that the Lord was fighting against them. Now they tried to turn back and escape! But it was too late for them!

Exodus 14:26-28. 26Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen.” 27So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

Lord told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea again, and when Moses stretched out his hand, the sea returned back to its normal state, and buried the horsemen, chariots, and the horses inside the water and none of them escaped. This episode happened at morning watch, which is anytime between 2am and 6am. Imagine someone had come to see the sunrise in the morning. He would have seen the beautiful calm waters of the sea and a beautiful sunrise. He would have never thought that this harmless sea ate up thousands of soldiers in no time, and over 2 million people walked through the sea.

Exodus 14:29-31. 29But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 30Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

Scripture says here that the Lord saved Israel that day with His mighty hand. Finally, the people of Israel believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.

Israelites had already witnessed the mighty Acts of God through those ten plagues, especially the horrible slaughter of the first born! They were seeing the presence of the Lord in the form of pillar of cloud in the day time, and pillar of fire in the night. Yet they were so afraid! They thought that they were finished. Our trust fails when we forget how the Lord had saved us before. If He could save us in the past, He could save us in the present, as well as in the future! They believed the Lord now, but when they faced the fiery trials again, they would quickly forget His saving ability!

Conclusion: what a great story for our faith walk! In Summary what can we learn from this story?

1. Let us follow the plan of God, no matter how foolish it may appear to be.
2. God deliberately brings us to dead end, to teach about real faith.
3. God is able all the time. He can never come to a dead end. As long as we have God we have a path forward.
4. He is the light to His children, but the wicked will see only darkness.
5. Evil may try to overpower us with full force, but God can destroy those forces in no time.
6. If God be for us who can be against us?

Let us march forward as soldiers of the Lord!

(Feel free to send your comment to pastor@acts242church.org.)