

Sunday Evening Message
Jersey Shore Baptist Church
Pastor Phil Erickson
January 24, 2021
Keep Moving Forward
Text – Exodus 14:1 - 14

Introduction

Note – This is a message developed from a daily devotional thought.

The context of this thought concerns the children of Israel as they are leaving the land of Israel. This was after the Lord had proven Himself to both the Israelites and the Egyptians through the ten plagues. This was after that first Passover when the death angel passed over the homes of the Egyptians and slew all of the first born among their children, and even their cattle. Israel is finally out of Egypt. They are free, but as we will soon see, there will still be battles to fight and hurdles to get over.

“[Is] not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For [it had been] better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

(Exodus 14:12-14)

It is human nature to be fearful, struggle in our faith, and to doubt what God is doing in our lives. The Israelites had been marvelously and miraculously delivered from their bondage in Egypt, but now they faced the obstacle of the Red Sea in front of them, as well as a huge army of pursuing Egyptians behind them. This was certainly a great test of their faith. God had promised to deliver them from Egypt and to bring them into the Promised Land, in Canaan. So far, God has kept his word. So far, He has overcome every obstacle and come through for Israel time and again in keeping his promise. But can they trust Him to deliver them in this next great challenge? YES! God had brought them this far, and He would continue to work until He finished what He started. We can trust God to finish what He started in us today as well:

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:” (Philippians 1:6)

The people of God who had previously witnessed all of the miracles involved with the ten plagues now doubted God's ability to deliver them, and they began to murmur against both God and the man God had given to lead them.

You are probably aware of the rest of the story. Moses rallies the people of God, and they muster enough faith and courage to keep moving forward:

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Exodus 14:13-14)

God had brought them this far; all they needed to do was keep moving forward.

1. Don't let fear keep you from moving forward.

The opposite of fear is faith. If you are fearful about what the future holds for you, you need to get an inoculation of faith. You get faith by spending time with God, and by hanging around with faithful people who believe that God can.

One of the most oft repeated commandments in the Bible is "fear not."

Turn to Mark 4:35 – 41

*"And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, **Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?** And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41)*

Also Numbers 14:1 – 5 – The ten spies who brought an evil report were fearful and faithless.

Illustration

Let me give you an illustration of this principle at work in our church recently. As many of you are aware, our church has been in a building project for many years now. Soon after we built our last addition, God revealed to us that we needed to add more nursery and fellowship space. We have been praying, planning, and preparing, as well as saving for this project for a decade now. [Note – It is extremely difficult and expensive to build anything in New Jersey.] We have

had several different design plans drawn up, and much discussion and consultation has been done with architects, engineers, township officials, etc. Last year, the time finally came to present our final plans to our township's planning board. I, for one, was a little apprehensive. Will they refuse to let us build? Will they require something that will make it impossible for us to afford the addition? We were afraid of all kinds of things that never came to pass. Somewhere along the way, going into the meeting, the Lord convinced me that He brought us this far, and He was going to see us through. I remember thinking to myself, "*why would God brings us all of this way, only to shut us down?*" He wouldn't. God had brought us to this point, and He was going to see us through until the end, just like He did with the Israelites. The planning board passed our project unanimously, and they even worked with us to make the project a little easier. There have been more obstacles in more recent months with COVID and with problems with lumber prices and lumber supply, and the availability of labor and contractors to do the work, but God will help us to navigate through all of that as well.

Don't listen to that voice of negativity inside of your head that's telling you "*it's impossible; it can't be done.*" Don't listen to the naysayers who are always murmuring and complaining, and doubting God. Listen to God. Find out what He wants you to do, trust His Word and His will, and keep moving forward. Stick your toes into the Red Sea of whatever obstacle you are facing, and watch what God will do.

2. Don't let frustration keep you from moving forward

Turn to Exodus 16:1 – 5 – the people were frustrated over whether or not they would have enough food.

They got tired of the manna eventually and they became frustrated because they wanted more. *"And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them. And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."* (Numbers 11:1-6)

3. Don't let failure keep you from moving forward

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29)

Illustrate – Peter quit on God because he failed, and if the Lord had not intervened he would have probably stayed down.

4. Don't let fatigue keep you from moving forward.

Go to 1 Kings 19:1 – 10 – Elijah quit because he was tired.

"And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." (Mark 6:31)

In God's wisdom, He instituted a day of rest: one day out of seven was designed by God for man's benefit in order to give his body and his soul time to recoup its energy. America was a better place; a much stronger place when we rested one day out of seven.

Make sure you get enough rest on a daily basis.

Make sure you take a sabbath day.

Make sure that you take some time to get away.

5. Don't let fun cause you keep from moving forward.

Turn to Exodus 32:1 – 7; 17 - 25 – the Molten Calf

Also Matthew 13:18 - 23

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." (2 Timothy 4:10)

One of the characteristics of the generation that we live in today is that we are: *"... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;"* (2 Timothy 3:4)

Conclusion

There are a lot of things – obstacles and hurdles that will cause us to get bogged down or diverted off of the path. According to Hebrews 12, there are also weights that will cause us to slow down. We must be aware of these things, and we must keep plowing forward.

God has brought you this far; don't stop now; keep moving forward in your Christian life.