

June 28, 2015

Stand Still... Get Moving!

Exodus 14:13-15

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. The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!"

A man absolutely hated his wife's cat and decided to get rid of him one day by driving him 20 blocks from his home and leaving him at the park.

As he was getting home, the cat was walking up the driveway!

The next day he decided to drive the cat 40 blocks away. He put the beast out of the car and quickly headed home.

Driving back up his driveway, there was the cat again!

He kept taking the cat further and further away but the cat would always beat him home. At last he decided to drive quite a few miles away--so he turned right, then left, past the bridge, then right again and another right until he reached what he thought was a safe distance from his home and left the cat there.

Hours later the man calls home to his wife: "Hon, is the cat there?"

"Yes," the wife answers, "why do you ask?"

Frustrated, the man answered, "Can you please put him on the phone? I'm lost and need directions."

Do you ever just want to get away from it all? Circumstances have you feeling trapped and stressed and you think, "If only I could run away, and get to a new place." The grass is always greener on the other side...that is until you go there and find out you have to water it too... and pull weeds, and mow it. Someone once said, "if the grass is greener on the other side of the fence it's probably astro-turf."

At times we feel oppressed and think, "if only I could start a new life then I could be free." Ever feel that way? Well, that is what the story of Exodus is about.

It's the story of escape from slavery, leaving miserable circumstances behind. But that is just part of the story. It's also about moving into a new life with new challenges on a new long journey. It is the story of what happens *after* getting away.

God sets His people free from slavery in Egypt. With His help they get away from it all.

It is a reminder of all we want to be released from; the things that enslave us. If only we could be free. But remember, this is less than half the story. God's people were freed from slavery and there was great joy, but it was not an easy journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Exodus is a foreshadow of the New Testament – Jesus Christ frees us from the oppression and bondage of sin; He frees us from a meaningless life, a life without purpose to a life of devotion to Our Lord God Himself.

He leads us through a journey of joy and fulfillment, yet it's not an easy journey, but one that leads us through the trouble, trials, and temptations of this life to His eternal home. Along the way, just as in Exodus, our journey is filled with disappointments, hardships, but in the end – the Promised Land.

Exodus also helps us to see, as the New testament helps us to see, that the power and presence of God is with us for the journey. Along the way there are disciplines of learning to be God's people, and there are commands we must follow, as well as the joys of serving and the joy and security, and blessing of being in the daily presence of God and the privilege of knowing, delighting in and worshipping the Holy One.

Just as in the journey of Exodus our journey with Jesus takes us from the freedom of the bondage of sin to a journey of following Him with all our heart. And this journey involves two things.

In our text for today Israel, the people of God have been set free from slavery in Egypt. They wanted to flee to the greener pastures on the other side of the fence. But they find themselves stuck between the Red Sea in front of them and the Egyptian Army that has come out in full force behind them. Israel panicked. I saw a poster this week that read:

**F.E.A.R.:**  
**Face Everything And Run or**  
**Face Everything And Rise,**  
the choice is yours.

Israel couldn't run or rise...it would seem, so they complained and blamed Moses, and wanted to go back to their bondage in Egypt. This is what the enemy wants to do, get you to fear, and give up hope so that going back to what God has released you from is tempting.

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. The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm." (v13-14)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! (v15)

Wait a minute, is it stand still or get moving? We have what may at first seem like a contradiction. Moses told the people, "Stand Still," and the Lord told Moses, "Tell the people to get moving!" Stand still...get moving! Well, which one is it, stand still or get moving. It's both.

The phrase "stand still" can also mean "stand firm." Moses was facing what appeared to be an inevitable danger. Yet he seems unruffled and tells the people to do the same. He says to them, "Don't be afraid. Be still and know that He is God, stand firm in your trust in Him and watch what He will do. Just stay calm."

Moses met their fears with strong faith. To Moses fear meant Face Everything And Rise. Where did Moses get his courage? He looked at that pillar of cloud and knew God was with him, he knew God was still accompanying them, and his confidence grew, solely on the hope of a loving and powerful God. He may not have expected how God was going to deliver them, but he knew he could trust God.

They needed to surrender not to hopelessness, not to the enemy, but to God. He would deliver them, but God had to test their faith, would they obey Him. It seems that after Moses spoke these words of faith, he went before the Lord, in prayer, crying out to God. Moses had to get on his face in the presence of God. His faith was in God, this is where his courage came from. And so before he could move forward, he had to first stand still before God.

We too will face trouble in our journey with the Lord. There are certain disciplines we need for this journey. Things like:

Scripture: hear, read, meditate on, memorize, study the Bible, not just to have head knowledge but to hear from God.

Prayer: Not just asking God for things but listening to God as well; not only praying to get from God but praying to get with God.

Silence and solitude: one of the most challenging and least practiced disciplines among Christians today. Yet this (being still before God) is vital to growing in Christ and grow in faith.

Psalms 37:7 NIV

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.

These private spiritual disciplines tune our heart to the heart of God. There is a direct link between your personal private devotional life and your personal faith.

There are trials that come in our life, sometimes unexpected and catch us off guard. Like my friend trying to get rid of the cat and getting lost himself, we need directions home. God offers us a way home to keep us from getting lost; a way that leads us back home to Him. It is this... to stand still.

I hear people describe their have morning devotions and the emphasis is to be filled up for the day; or to intercede for others. I'm talking about something else, not turning to God to get something but to be with Someone.

We have devotions, we come to church on Sunday and perhaps we are involved with a small group, hoping it will help us to withstand what life throws our way. It won't. We need to pay attention to God all through the day, every day. We must carry His presence like Brother Lawrence wrote about in *Practicing the Presence of God*. We need to slow down the pace of our lives and balance activity with contemplation. There are great spiritual disciplines each one a tool and gift for us in our journey with Jesus. Yet we need a time of stopping to surrender...stopping to surrender to God in trust.

We know that Moses was in God's presence praying, for in verse 15 the Lord asked Moses, "Why are you crying out to me?" It is then that the Lord commands Moses, "Tell the people to get moving!" There is a time to listen and a time to act. Private devotions, time with God in prayer, Bible, silence and solitude prepares us to get moving. The phrase "Get moving" in verse 15 literally means, "Start on a journey."

Moses told the people to trust God, now they would prove that trust by starting the journey, by moving forward. Walk towards the Red Sea, walk towards the wall, it seems unreasonable, it doesn't seem possible, but God said move so get moving. You have to face that wall or you will stagnate there rather than move forward with God's purpose for your life. In this journey you will come up against walls you will have to find a way through it. You must trust God to get you through it, but you have to get moving.

I said earlier that our spiritual journey involves two things. They are: (1) stand still and (2) get moving. They are not a contradiction in terms, but complimentary. In other words, **We must stand still in God's presence, and then go forward in God's Power.** We must do both. Before we act, before we move, we must get still before God and wait patiently on Him. Wait until He tells you what to do, or not do, when to move or not move. But when He gives the command to get moving be sure to obey Him. **We must stand still in God's presence, and then go forward in God's Power.**

First stand still: that is where we connect with God; that is where we remind ourselves of where our hope lies; that is where our faith grows, that is where we surrender to Him. That is where we hear from God and get direction and guidance from Him. He will direct your path.

But there will come a point when God will say to you, "Why are you still crying out to Me? Get moving! Why are you still crying out to Me? I've told you what to do not get moving! Enough crying out to Me, move forward!"

Prayer must be followed up with obedient action. Sometimes you pray about what to do, and God tells you what to do, but you keep praying about the same thing. You keep asking for guidance and God brings the same thought to your mind of the guidance He

has already given, but you keep asking. Maybe that continued prayer is an excuse justifying why you are failing to act. If God has told you what to do, then get moving!

The past encounters Moses had with God assured him that God was leading. Another victory would come and he believed God's word. There was no need for further crying out to God. The time to move had come. It was a step of faith to move toward the treacherous water before them; yet God command was, "move!" At some point fearful praying must stop and the step of faith must be taken.

Some act without first being still before God and the results are disastrous. But crying before God and never moving forward is also disastrous. This journey of life is difficult, sometimes we want to just Face Everything And Run, depending on how you do *that* can be disastrous. We must choose to Face Everything And Rise knowing God is with us.

Here is what the bible teaches us about our journey. You always need these two things: Stand still and get moving. Stand still in God's presence, and then go forward in God's Power.