

NOBODY'S BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP RED SEA:

Seven Impossible Lessons (by Dr. Stan Reeder)

A Study of Exodus 14

#5 of 5 in the Exodus Segment of the series: Moses – Mr. Nobody

INTRODUCTION:

Nobody's impossibility

Last Sunday we looked at the significance of the Passover and the exodus by night out of Egypt. Within a couple of days of leaving Egypt, Moses, Mr. Nobody, was faced with an impossible situation. He was in a dead end street by the name of Pi Hahiroth, with all of Egypt's army marching right toward him.

Picture yourself at a red light. Without thinking, you give your horn a little tap when the car ahead of you doesn't start moving when the light turns green. Unfortunately that car is loaded up with a bunch of mean looking, beer drinking, thugs hanging out the windows of their war-wagon. They decide to start following you so you turn down a side street to shake them. They are right behind you. You make another turn and another . . . they are still there. Finally, in desperation you make a last second turn into an unknown side street only to discover that you're in a dead end. And now the boys are getting out of their car and walking toward you, and they've got a baseball bat and you're pretty sure they are not interested in a friendly game of ball.

That was how Moses and the Israelites must have felt as Pharaoh, his chariots, his horsemen, and infantry rumbled toward them with the Red Sea at their backs.

Nobody was "painted into a corner"

His "back was against the wall"

He was "between a rock and a hard place"

He was "up a wall," "up a tree," "up against it," and "hard pressed."

He was "Up a creek without a paddle" . . . and this was one big creek. It was the Red Sea and not only did he not have a paddle, he didn't even have a boat, and he had 2 million people to get across. There was nowhere for Nobody to go.

Nobody was about to go to school. He was going to learn "The Seven Lessons from Impossibilities"

My parents had a "razor strap". It was a thick piece of black leather 5" wide and 18" long. When I was about 7, I had a bright idea. If the razor strap went mysteriously missing, I would no longer be on the receiving end of its benefits; so I hid it. For three months, no strappings: that was an all-time record for me. Then my mother put up a reward for anyone who could find the razor strap.... 10 cents. I could be bought. I found

the strap, got the dime and then.... You guessed it.... Got the strap – about 3 months worth!

The old hymn sums up quite nicely the benefit of that old strap:
“I need thee every hour, temptations lose their power, when thou art nigh”

Benjamin Franklin was right: *The things which hurt, instruct*

THE SEVEN LESSONS FROM IMPOSSIBILITIES:

1. God leads us into and through impossibilities (Exodus 14:1-4).

Some have faced impossible situations in the past and we have faced them because we have made mistakes, or very poor decisions, or allowed sin to enter into our lives and we paid the consequence of a terrible situation.

The lesson Nobody learned about impossible situations is that sometimes we are faced with an impossible situation even though we have done everything right! In fact not only have we done everything right . . . we were led into that impossible situation by God himself.

Some of my biggest struggles have been over understanding God’s will for my life. The Israelites didn’t have that problem. This was not a question of whether it was God’s will for them to be right where they were, camped at Pi Hahirorth, trapped between the Devil and the Deep Red Sea. Exodus 14:1 says: ¹*Then the Lord said to Moses,* ²*“Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. . .* ³*Pharaoh will think, “The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.”* ⁴*And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them.*

They not only had the verbal instructions . . . they had the cloud by day and the fire by night that always went before them. All they had to do was follow the cloud. Wouldn’t that be great.

You’re wondering if you should take the job in Toledo . . . you wake up one morning and the cloud starts rolling down I75 – sign the contract and rent the Uhaul.

You’re not sure if you should marry the girl. You show up at her apartment to pick her up for a date and there’s the fire over her head. Hey, go out and buy the ring. Pop the question.

That’s the kind of certain direction that led the Israelites right into this impossible situation. Exodus 13:18 indicates this to be so: ^{13:18} *So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea.* It’s interesting? Sometimes God leads you into a place where you are way over your head. Why?

2. God introduces us to ourselves through impossibilities (Exodus 14:8-14).

Impossibilities give us a very unique glimpse at who we really are. Notice that verse 8 tells us that, the Israelites ⁸ ***were marching out boldly***. They were feeling pretty good about themselves. The Lord used the impossibility of being trapped between the devil and the deep Red Sea to introduce the Israelites to what their attitude really was.

A. Israel's attitude regarding impossibilities:

The Lord knows, the Israelites needed a little attitude check and the Lord knows I need them from time to time and I know . . . I mean, the Lord knows some of you need a little attitude check from time to time. Enter the impossible situation.

i. Terror (Exodus 14:10a).

They got off to a bad start. ^{Exodus 14:10a} ***As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified.***

ii. Desperate prayer (Exodus 14:10b).

Next, they ^{Exodus 14:10b} ***cried out to the Lord.***

We are not talking about deep spiritual prayer here.

I like the story of the three pastors who were talking about the best way to pray.

One past said: "The most effective way to pray is to get down on my knees and fold my hands in reverence and humility."

The second pastor said: "I pray best on my feet with my hands held up to God in praise and adoration."

The third said: "I've done my best praying while laying flat on the floor with my face in the carpet, laying prostrate before the Lord."

While they were having this discussion there was an AT&T guy in fixing the phone and he just couldn't resist saying: "I once did my best piece of praying when my safety belt broke and I was dangling upside down off a telephone pole."

Most of us have much trouble praying when we are in little trouble, but we have little trouble praying when we are in much trouble.

- Richard Cook in The Tremendous Power of Prayer, 122.

As soon as they called out their panic-ridden, terror-driven, desperation prayer - "Oh God, help us!" - they went right to work on Moses.

iii. Conflict (Exodus 14:11-12).

Look what they say in verse 11: ¹¹ *They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?”* Of course the first thing they do is blame the preacher. If there is anything wrong . . . just blame the preacher.

Next, they just couldn't resist the old “I told you so” routine. No, that technique wasn't invented by your spouse. ^{Exodus 14:12} *Didn't we say to you in Egypt, “Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?” It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”*

That's a far cry then Patrick Henry's “Live free or die” line isn't it?

God leads us right into impossible situations in order to introduce us to ourselves. You really see what's inside when faced with impossibilities. The natural inclination of the attitude is to let fear control you. Yell at God. Then pick a fight with some one. That's the Israelite way and that's all too often, our way.

B. God's attitude regarding impossibilities:

God is interested in teaching us a different attitude. ^{Exodus 14:13a} *Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid.*

i. Courage (Exodus 14:13a)

Our attitude is terror, God's attitude is courage. Jesus' most oft repeated command was “fear not”.

ii. Waiting and Watching (Exodus 14:13b)

The next bit of advice was ^{Exodus 14:13b} *Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.* Stand firm – wait, and see – watch.

iii. Peace (Exodus 14:14).

When everyone seemed panic-stricken . . . I went to my room . . . and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed . . . Soon a great comfort crept into my soul that God Almighty had taken the whole business into His own hands.

-Abraham Lincoln in The Tremendous Power of Prayer, 127.

^{Exodus 14:14} *“The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.”*

The KJV says be at peace. Our way – conflict, pick a fight, blame somebody, yell at somebody. The New American Standard Bible actually translates that phrase “*while you keep silent.*” What is our natural way when things are going poorly. We just have to start griping to somebody. “Grumble, grumble, murmur, murmur, complain, complain.”

This attitude of keeping silent in bad times is probably the toughest to maintain of them all.

I read a great little saying the other day:

*If you complain, you remain!
If you praise, you're raised!*

3. God shows us that nothing is impossible through impossibilities (Exodus 14:15-16).

Exodus 14:15: Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me! Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶ Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

"Well, of course the old hand-over-the-sea, walk-across-on-dry-ground trick." (Don Adams voice). "Second time I fell for that one this year." Moses and the Israelites were being taught that impossible situations are not impossible for God. *What is impossible with men, is possible with God" (Luke 18:27). "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).*

4. God reveals Himself through impossibilities (Exodus 14:17-18).

Exodus 14:18 "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." Don't forget that when you are going through your impossibility you are testifying to the world about who God is. Is he gaining glory by the way you are facing your impossibility right now? Don't forget that when you face an impossibility, it is not so much a problem as an opportunity for God to reveal himself to you in a greater way than He ever has before.

5. God does the fighting through impossibilities (Exodus 14:23-25).

Look at verse 24: *Exodus 14:24 During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."*

God does his greatest breakthroughs in our lives when we finally grasp that the struggle is not of the flesh; when we concede that it is beyond our own resources; when we understand it is *"not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit" says the Lord. (Zechariah 4:6).*

*When I panic, I run.
When I run, I lose.
When I lose, God waits.*

When I wait, He fights.
When He fights, He wins.
And when He wins, I learn.

- Charles Swindoll (*Moses*, 225)

6. God rids us of enemies through impossibilities (Exodus 14:26-30).

Exodus 14:30 That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore.

When you get into an impossible situation, it is amazing the purging work that God can do in your life. You can be purged of people enemies. You can also be purged from the enemies of the soul - whether habits that destroy, sin that is held on to or that holds on to us.

I have found, when I finally come to grips with the fact that a situation truly is impossible for me, that is when God releases the purging power of his grace that frees me from that which bound.

I have found, it is when I truly realize something is impossible, that I am willing to surrender full control to the Lord.

I have found that it is when I am in impossibilities that I come to him with the kind of fervent prayer that pleases Him. When we are faced with an impossibility, God delivers us from enemies

7. God builds our faith through impossibilities (Exodus 14:31).

There is no other way to learn trust and faith other than through facing impossible situations.

It is through impossibilities that God raises up people of great faith.

And here is the gracious law of the kingdom, that every time I exercise my will [in the face of an impossibility] I add to its power. Every difficulty [impossibility] overcome adds its strength to my resources. Every enemy conquered marches henceforth in my own ranks. I go "from strength to [greater] strength" (Psalm 84:7).

- John Henry Jowett, *My Daily Meditation*, 229.

APPLICATION:

Our impossibility is God's highway to the Promised Land.