

DESERT LESSONS

FREEDOM

Exodus 13 – 15

Pastor Daniel Hahn

April 18 – 19, 2020

Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. — Genesis 15:13 – 14

1. **When we follow without all the answers we often come to discover that God was averting us from disasters we never could have anticipated (13:17 – 22).**

Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. — Numbers 9:17

Because of Your great compassion You did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. — Nehemiah 9:19

*Based on purely tactical considerations, these new marching orders were an open invitation to disaster and defeat. God wanted the Israelites to halt their march in the direction of Canaan, turn back toward Egypt, and then stop and set up an encampment with their backs against the sea. As even an amateur tactician could readily have seen, the maneuver would put the Israelites at the mercy of any armed force that might come upon their encampment, trapping them between the attacking army and the sea with no line of escape. — Jonathan Kirsch, *Moses, A Life**

*My guess is that the waiting builds faith's backbone. The waiting is necessary to cultivate a faith to die for and live for, a faith that will literally change the world. Waiting is necessary for faith in the same way a chrysalis is necessary for a caterpillar, to change it from a grub that crawls the earth to a butterfly that dances the air. Many of Jesus' disciples, then as now, would die for their faith. That kind of faith isn't grown in a week. And, mostly, it's not grown in warmth and sunshine. Its hardest growth, where the roots get deep and tough, happens in darkness. — Mark Buchanan, *Spiritual Rhythm**

2. **When we work ourselves into an impatient panic we live in unnecessary tension forgetting that God has control even when we don't (14:5 – 14).**

It is a continuing challenge to surrender ourselves to an unknown future ... to see our powerlessness as an experience of being guided, even when we do not know exactly where. We can see that a growing surrender to the unknown is a sign of spiritual maturity. — Henri Nouwen

3. **When we watch for God's supernatural movement we begin to notice He's working in ways we never imagined (14:19 – 31).**

God doesn't tell time as we do. He doesn't jump to our alarm bells. He ignores our deadlines and removes our crutches. He will leave that particular Red Sea absolutely closed, without an opening, without a sign, until He has finished teaching us the lessons we need to learn. Once that's accomplished, He has no trouble parting the waters and sending us through. ... Coming to the Red Sea is just as much a part of His plan as crossing it. It may well be that the Lord is breaking a habit born in Egypt, a habit that has no business living in Canaan. Those habits are tough to break. The tears flow as God works in His time. But in the burning of those tears, God becomes very significant and real. — Charles Swindoll

Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over? — Isaiah 51:10

Your ways, God, are holy. ... Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, though Your footprints were not seen. — Psalm 77:13 – 19

Trust His plan even when the way feels unsure. What feels unsure?

Trust His priorities even when they seem unreasonable. What feels unreasonable?

Trust His purposes even when some questions go unanswered (for now). What is unanswered?

It doesn't matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies, whether it comes between me and God or whether it presses me nearer His heart. — Hudson Taylor

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you recall from the message this past weekend?
- Why did Pharaoh finally relent and let God's people go?
- Why didn't God send the Israelites on the shortest route (see Exodus 13:17)?
- What miraculous provision was leading the people by day and by night?
- What did Pharaoh do when he realized the loss of his slave labor force?
- Why do you think God put his people in a position where their own military strength was insufficient?
- How did the people initially respond to the realization of their apparent defeat?
- God did the completely unexpected in rescuing his people. Can you recall a time in your life when God answered your prayers in a completely unexpected way?
- How have you seen God show you His power when you felt powerless?
- Why do you think trust is such a hard lesson for us to learn?
- How could you trust God, and rest in God, at a new level with what is facing you this week?