

GOD'S GUIDANCE

Exodus series pt 8: Chapters 14-15
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 9/24/23, Matt Heerema

Please open you Bibles or turn into your scripture journal to Exodus chapter 14.

We are on week 8 of 20 our walk through of the book of Exodus, and today we're finally getting out of Egypt! This "scene" in the story is extremely dramatic, it almost feels like a Lord of the Rings sci-fi fantasy story. It's more accurate to say that The Lord of the Rings feels a lot like the book of Exodus. You know what they say, "Truth is stranger than fiction." This is the real deal. It's amazing to think that these events literally happened at a physical place on the earth, some parts of which you can still go visit today.

Because the narrative is so intense, I don't want to break it up with my comments, so I'm going to read the whole thing through, follow along with me, as I do, and then I'd like to make five observations. As we are reading through this story, observe with me five truths about God's guidance, that were true then, and true now:

- God's Guidance is **clear**
- God's Guidance is **counter-Intuitive**
- God's Guidance is **for our good**
- God's Guidance is **opposed by the enemy**
- God's Guidance is **for His glory**

Read with me: **Exodus 13:17-14:31**

THIS ACTUALLY HAPPENED.

What a wild scenario! As I mentioned, Christians believe that these events actually took place, just as recorded here. There are many who try to give naturalistic explanations for how these events might have occurred. They say that Israel walked through a particularly shallow place in the sea, like a swamp. But that doesn't match the description here. Some try to say that the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire was an intense kind of thunderstorm that happens in the region, but the text says that this pillar of cloud and pillar of fire led them around the Arabian peninsula. This is not a natural occurrence, it is the supernatural intervention of the God of Israel.

God is guiding his people out of Egypt, and to the promised land. And this narrative shows us five truths about God's guidance of his people, that still apply to us today.

GOD'S GUIDANCE IS CLEAR

Exodus 13:21 (CSB)

The Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way during the day and in a pillar of fire to give them light at night, so that they could travel day or night.

I made this point last week, but I wanted to restate it because there is so much confusion in our culture about it. When we speak of God's clear leading, and look at the Old Testament examples of God speaking to Prophets, God coming through on miraculous signs that make his will obvious and his word clear, we can sometimes get the wrong idea that He will usually still work this way. That when we are trying to figure out God's will for our life, we should listen to "hear what God is saying to us", or wait for signs or miracles. That is not the typical way God leads.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (CSB)

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.

Jesus performed the miracles and revealed God's will most clearly to his people, and we have the record of that in the scriptures. His disciples, the apostles, who traveled with him, and whom he taught directly, through the guidance of the holy spirit, recorded everything Jesus taught them in the gospels and in the epistles. That is how we know God's leading now.

We have the clear leading of God here in these scriptures. Yes The Holy Spirit still helps us and leads us, but He does so through the scriptures. If you are well familiar with the scriptures, it can sometimes "feel" like God is speaking directly to you, because He is, in His Words in The Scriptures. But if you don't know the scriptures, you won't be able to hear Him speaking.

God's guidance is as clear as it was in speaking directly to Moses, and leading in a pillar of cloud and fire. In the scriptures. We must give attention to them.

As clear as God's guidance is...

GOD'S GUIDANCE CAN SEEM COUNTER-INTUITIVE

Exodus 14:2-3 (CSB)

Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you must camp in front of Baal-zephon, facing it by the sea. Pharaoh will say of the Israelites: They are wandering around the land in confusion; the wilderness has boxed them in.

God led his people to a very unstrategic place. Trapped "...between the devil and the deep blue sea", a rock and hard place, (an army and a wet place...) He has a reason for this, but it is important for us to realize that at times, following God can look, in the moment, like foolishness.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25 (CSB)

but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Even if God's leading sometimes feels counter-intuitive...

GOD'S GUIDANCE IS FOR OUR GOOD

Exodus 13:17 (CSB)

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them along the road to the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearby; for God said, "The people will change their minds and return to Egypt if they face war.

The road to the land of the Philistines was the most obvious route between Egypt and the promised land. It was quick, less than two weeks, it was straight, but it was heavily guarded by both Egyptians and Philistines. God knew his people. He knew that it would not be best for them to take the obvious route. There were dangers there.

Sometimes in our following of God's clear leading in the scriptures, it takes us to places that seem inefficient. His leading can take us to confusing places. We might even see paths to take in life that look better, shorter, easier, more efficient, but it may be that God is aware of other factors that we are not aware of, that would actually make that path worse. We can trust God. He knows all the variables, much better than we do.

But that doesn't mean it will be easy, because...

GOD'S GUIDANCE IS OPPOSED BY THE ENEMY

Exodus 14:6-8 (CSB)

So he got his chariot ready and took his troops with him; **he took six hundred of the best chariots and all the rest of the chariots of Egypt, with officers in each one.** The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out defiantly.

Just like the conquered Pharaoh and his officials did not want to let their slaves go that easily, so the conquered Satan does not want to let us go that easily.

Hebrews 2:14b-15 (CSB)

...so that through [Jesus's] death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.

Last spring we preached through Revelation. For a more full treatment on how our enemy - Satan - tries to oppose God's people throughout history, check out that series. That's what the book of Revelation is about.

But through lies and oppression and persecution, God's people, following God's guidance, will face opposition. We should expect it in our life.

But remember, when there is opposition...

GOD'S GUIDANCE IS FOR HIS GLORY

Exodus 14:18 (CSB)

The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord **when I receive glory** through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

God has a purpose in allowing the opposition: it brings him glory. In other words, all creation gets to see what an amazing kind of God He is as he delivers His people from their captivity to sin, and protects them and leads them through the opposition.

When a blind man was brought to Jesus, and an answer was demanded of him as to why he was suffering, "Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him"" (John 9:3 CSB).

When we face hardship and suffering in life, and we ask God "why is this happening to me?!" there are usually many answers, and we don't get to know all of them, or sometimes any of them, but we always know two answers: this is happening to me as an opportunity for God's Glory, and my ultimate good. And that brings us hope.

And God did get great glory from this event! Look at the response of his people:

RESPONSE OF PRAISE:

Exodus 14:31 (CSB)

When Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

And they create a whole song, which was then recorded for all of history here in chapter 15. And the central line in the hymn is verse 11.

Exodus 15:11 (CSB)

Lord, who is like you among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?

And this should be our response for God's work in our life as well.

As we follow God's **clear** guidance through His Word, as **counter-intuitive** as it may seem, and as we remember that his guidance is for our **good**, even with as much **opposition**, suffering and oppression as we might face from the enemy's death throws, his final angry lashes, he can't have our soul, but he's going to scream and rant about it and try to make our lives miserable if he can, we can maintain hope knowing that God will get great **glory** out of it.

Brothers and sisters, as Paul told the Philippian church, as we follow God's guidance:

Philippians 2:5-11 (CSB)

5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. 7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross. 9 For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 **so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Let's pray.