

“STAY CALM & TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN FAITH!”
by Rom A. Pegram (4/26/20)

Folks, don't ever forget, as we place our faith in God, that it'll be God who'll be leading us through every Red Sea experience of our lives! And remember ... God is still leading his people today! The Egyptians were on their tail; the Israelites were frightened to say the least. And, they'd just got done telling Moses that it'd be better to return to slavery than die in the desert at the hands of the Egyptians. We pick up with today's section of Exodus 14:13-15; listen carefully to God's word to us today...

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. ¹⁴ The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!

Tell the people to move forward; just take the next step ... *in faith*. We'll get back to that one in just a few moments. First, let's review:

- STRATEGY 1 – Realize that God means for you to be right where you are...
- STRATEGY 2 – Be more concerned for God's glory than for your relief...
- STRATEGY 3 – Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord...
- STRATEGY 4 – Pray!

Now, here's God Strategy 5: **STRATEGY 5: STAY CALM & CONFIDENT AND GIVE GOD TIME TO WORK!** Verse 13a again: But Moses told the people, “Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today.” And what was the LORD going to do to rescue them on that day? Moses goes on to tell them in the last part of v. 13(b): “...The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again.”

My father used to have an expression that he would use on all in our household. He often used to tell us kids (especially the ones who were more excitable), “Don't get excited until I do!”

You know, that's pretty much what God was telling Moses and the people of Israel in this section of scripture: DON'T GET EXCITED UNTIL I DO! Simply follow my instructions. How much better off we would be if we would listen to God's wisdom here: DON'T GET EXCITED UNTIL GOD DOES...

So, what is he telling us in this FIFTH STRATEGY? Let me answer that with a question: How often do you LEAVE ROOM FOR GOD? It's one of the hardest things in life to do, isn't it? Think about your life—every area. How much room do you leave for God in ... your home life, your work life, or your play life? Yet, that's the key to #5: Listen...

STAYING CALM & CONFIDENT IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULT TIMES INVOLVES ALLOWING GOD TO BE GOD! This is what the biblical phrase 'wait on the Lord' is all about: committing our difficult situations to God in prayer, trusting him, and waiting for

him to work! Now, let me be the first to say this runs counter to what our human instincts want to do: fix things (especially us guys)! That's why 'waiting on the Lord' is *an act of faith*...

As author Robert J. Morgan would say: "...many a modern migraine would be cured by a good dose of Psalm 37:7-8," which tells us: "Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act....⁸ Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm."

If you are sensing we're in the middle of a tough situation right now, perhaps you need to entrust the problem to God and just leave it in his hands for a while. Remember, it is God alone who can part the waters; he's done it before; he can do it again in your life! Staying calm & confident in the midst of a tough situation means ... *leaving room for God* in your life—allowing God to *be* God in your life... Next:

STAYING CALM & CONFIDENT IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULT TIMES ALSO INVOLVES NOT GIVING IN TO FEAR! Maturity can be described as the ability to keep one's passions or emotions under control; this is God's desire for us—to walk by faith and not just by feelings...

I have a niece who's now a teenager, but when Lily was around 2 years old, she had little control over her emotions. Have you ever been around a 2-year-old? They're just amazing, aren't they?

When Lily was happy ... it was as if she was 'happy all over!' You couldn't stifle her; she would race through the house like a little tornado, laughing, playing, and sometime screaming (joyfully, of course)! And then other times, she was sad &/or angry from head to toe—no middle way at all. This involved a different kind of screaming, crying, flailing of hands, and many times stomping the feet!

Lily, at that age, had very little control over her emotions ... and, more than likely, none of us did. But again, maturity can be described as *the ability to keep one's passions or emotions under control!* And that's God's desire for us—to live by faith and not by emotions ... so we can remain calm & confident in the midst of life's difficult times...

In scripture, God gives us these words to live by:

- *Deuteronomy 1:29-31* (NLT) says, "But I said to you, 'Don't be shocked or afraid of them!³⁰ The LORD your God is going ahead of you. He will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt.³¹ And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you all along the way as you traveled through the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place."
- *Deuteronomy 31:6* (NLT) says, "So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."
- *Romans 8:31, 37* (NLT) reminds us, "What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ...³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us."

Many times, we cannot solve problems, heal hurts, change circumstances, or win our own battles; at those times, we must kneel in prayer, and then stand to see what God will do! We must *leave room for God*, then *stay calm & give God time to work*... Finally:

STRATEGY 6: WHEN UNSURE, TAKE THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP BY FAITH! Verse 15 reminds us: Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!”

There was a 19th century Bible scholar by the name of C.H. Mackintosh who believed the Red Sea did not divide throughout *all at once* ... but opened progressively as Israel moved forward, so that they needed to trust God for each new step. (I know you’ve seen the Moses movies, but those are not always the most accurate interpretations of what went on.) Mackintosh shares this: “God never gives guidance for two steps at a time. I must take one step, and then I get light for the next. This keeps the heart in abiding dependence upon God.”

‘Good description of how we’re being pushed to live right now, isn’t it? It really goes without saying, folks ... God generally leads his children step-by-step, provides for us day-by-day, and cares for us moment-by-moment:

- Nehemiah 9:19 (TLB) says, “The pillar of cloud led them forward *day by day* [italics mine].”
- Psalm 42:8 (TLB) tells us, “*Day by day* the LORD also pours out his steadfast love upon me [italics mine].”
- In Luke 11:3 (TEV), we find this prayer: “Give us *day by day* the food we need [italics mine].” (And if our food, then also our daily work, our daily plans, our daily opportunities...)

Jane and I learned this lesson several years ago when our lives changed suddenly in answer to God’s call to ministry; *those next steps were very scary!* How in the world was I going to get back to school (I’d only finished one year of college at that point), afford it, support a family of 4, and do a good job at all of it? Jane and I had to decide early on that we were going to trust God and take ... one step at a time. We would pray ... and then obey; and it was in our obedience that God would reveal the next step:

- That’s how I passed a vocal audition at Asbury College, after not having sung for the better part of 10 years—the first step...
- That’s how God opened doors for employment at Airborne Express in Lexington, KY, the second door I walked into—the second step...
- That’s how God provided affordable housing for us to live in Wilmore, KY (where the school is) in a little 2-bedroom duplex to get us started—the third step...

When you don’t know what to do next, *tell fear to ‘take a hike’ and look to Christ for that next step!* Trust God for guidance in small increments. Following God’s will isn’t a matter of unveiling ... but *unfolding* ... just like at the Red Sea—asking us to trust each and every step along the way. The One who sees our faraway future reveals each step

toward that future ... *one step at a time*. We could not handle it any other way ... and God loves us enough to lay it out for us just like that. So, remember...

STRATEGY 5: STAY CALM & CONFIDENT AND GIVE GOD TIME TO WORK! The main thing here is ... LEAVE ROOM FOR GOD in your life! And...

STRATEGY 6: WHEN UNSURE, TAKE THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP BY FAITH! And know the God who loves us more than any other ... will be there to catch us and show us the way. That's what walking by faith—not by fear—is all about...