

“LOOK TODAY IN THE EYE AND PRAISE GOD!”
by Rom A. Pegram (5/10/20)

You’ve probably heard the old saying, “**Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. There was no one there.**” I always liked that saying. But, in light of that, let me ask you this: *What is it that you fear today?* I’ll guarantee you, as your pastor, that FAITH is the answer to your greatest fear today! But, like most things in our life with God, there are two sides to this equation—God’s and ours! FAITH is a gift from God, but whether we pick it up and use it ... is entirely up to us! Here’s another old saying for you: “**Faith in many ways is like a wheelbarrow. You must put some real push behind it to make it work.**” Let’s find out today how we can do that in our lives, shall we? Just listen (Exodus 14:30-31; 15:1-2, NLT)...

That is how the LORD rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. ³¹ When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the LORD had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the LORD and in his servant Moses. ... ¹ Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD: “I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has hurled both horse and rider into the sea. ² The LORD is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him— my father’s God, and I will exalt him!

So, let’s get right into our final two strategies for today. What do we learn from the story of Moses? Here it is...

STRATEGY 9: VIEW YOUR CURRENT CRISIS AS A FAITH-BUILDER FOR THE FUTURE! What the Israelites experienced at the end of Exodus, Chapter 14, was nothing short of miraculous ... and they knew it! But not only that; the Israelites actually benefitted from what seemed to them—I’m sure—like a narrow escape. Their faith in both God and their leader, Moses, was strengthened for the great challenges that were ahead of them (*they had no idea, but God sure did*)...

If our Red Sea moments in life are supposed to be ‘faith-builders,’ then let’s take just a moment to define this thing called FAITH. First, I want to say that ‘Faith is all about FROGS!’

Some time ago, in Ft. Worth, Texas, there was a gunman who walked into Wedgewood Baptist Church during a youth rally that was being held there. Among those killed that day was 14-year-old Cassie Griffin. Later, when reading accounts of her brief life, we find that Cassie had a collection of FROG figurines, FROG trinkets, FROG jewelry, and so on. According to her parents, the word FROG really summarized her philosophy on life. So, what does it stand for? It stands for **Fully Rely on God!** ‘Not a bad definition of FAITH, is it? But let’s expand our definition a little further...

Faith is really about REASONABLE ASSUMPTIONS ... like these: ***Faith is believing that what the Lord has told us will be accomplished!*** Luke 1:45 reminds us of this; when Mary visited her relative Elizabeth, Elizabeth cried out about Mary:

“You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

Faith is being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He’s promised!

In *Romans 4:20-21* Paul—speaking of Father Abraham—says...

“Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.”

Finally, faith means believing that things will happen just as God has told us! In *Acts 27:23-25* Paul is a good example of what our faith should be like in the midst of a storm:

“For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, ²⁴ and he said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What’s more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.’ ²⁵ So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.”

So, faith is about making reasonable assumptions about his care *over* and guidance *of* our lives, based on what we know from God’s word. Finally, ***consider Him faithful who has made these promises!*** And, when it comes to today’s Strategy 9, also know this:

Know there are DEGREES of faith ... and *Jesus richly rewards those who fully trust Him!* So, folks, we need to progress in our faith *intentionally* ... knowing that as we go through our Red Sea moments in life, we can trust the One who’s made us the promises...

Several years ago, a Houston pastor told the story about when his 5-year-old daughter asked for a dollhouse. He was busy reading a book at the time, but he nodded and told his daughter that he would build her one, then promptly returned to reading his book.

A short time later, he glanced out the window to see his daughter, arms crammed with dishes and dolls, making trip after trip until she had a huge pile in the middle of the yard. The pastor asked his wife what his daughter was doing...

“Oh, you promised to build her a dollhouse, and she believes you. She’s just getting ready for it.” According to the pastor, he tossed aside his book, raced to the local lumberyard for supplies, and quickly built his daughter that dollhouse. Why? It was her simple, childlike faith in his promise that did it...

And that’s the way God wants it to be with us, too! The next time you have a mountain in life to climb, or you’re backed into a cul-de-sac with no way out, put your faith in the One who made the promises ... and just wait to see how God reacts to *your* childlike

faith! ... As we wrap this series up today, let me give you the final God Strategy for Difficult Times...

STRATEGY 10: DON'T FORGET TO PRAISE GOD! Exodus 15:1-2 lets us in on what the Israelites did right after they were saved by God:

“Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD: “I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has hurled both horse and rider into the sea.
² The LORD is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him— my father’s God, and I will exalt him!”

We too need to have a perspective of praise ... just like this one! One of the reasons God allows some tough situations in life ... is *to give us the opportunity to sing His praises! He expects gratitude for His deliverances!* Do you remember the story of Jesus healing the Ten Lepers? Only one came back to thank Jesus ... and he wanted to know where the other nine were ... and rightfully so!

Folks, let's have 'a perspective of praise' just like the Israelites did, as we see God bringing us through the difficult times of our lives! One thing I've truly learned in life is this: PERSPECTIVE MATTERS...

I'm sure many of you have flown either in the military or commercially in your lives. Have you ever taken off on a very overcast day ... or a stormy day? I have. And it seems like the worse the weather is, the more drastic the ascent on take-off! Up, up, you go ... directly into the stormy clouds. You pierce those clouds ... and then, finally, you level off at a high altitude ABOVE the storm. In a matter of minutes, you've gone from a gray and angry storm ... to an altitude where it seems much more peaceful, because you're now looking down on those same clouds—those same storms... *What a difference perspective makes!*

Folks, *let's develop a perspective of praise!* Wisdom, some have said, is really seeing things from God's point-of-view. Let's learn to do that ... together. And let's remember these final 2 God Strategies for Difficult Times...

Strategy 9: **VIEW YOUR CURRENT CRISIS AS A FAITH-BUILDER FOR THE FUTURE!** *And...*

Strategy 10: **DON'T FORGET TO PRAISE GOD!** Again, God expects gratitude for His deliverances...

So, whether you are on the upper side or the underside of the storm, whether you're on the east bank or the west bank of the Red Sea, *God will make a way!* And, as He does ... don't forget to praise Him!