

“WHEN EVERYTHIG SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, THERE IS GOD”

Exodus 14:19-31, 15:1-11, 18

September 13, 2020

“The little country schoolhouse was heated by an old-fashioned, pot-bellied coal stove – it was 1916. A little boy had the job of coming to school early each day to start the fire and warm the room before his teacher and his classmates arrived.

“One morning they arrived to find the schoolhouse engulfed in flames. Confusion between gasoline and kerosene had caused an explosion, catching the little boy and his older brother on fire. They dragged the unconscious little boy out of the flaming building more dead than alive. He had major burns over the lower half of his body and was taken to the nearby county hospital. His older brother, Floyd, died from the severity of his own burns.

“From his bed the dreadfully burned, semi-conscious little boy faintly heard the doctor talking to his mother. The doctor told his mother that this son would surely die, too – which was for the best, really – for the terrible fire had devastated the lower half of his body.

“But the brave boy didn’t want to die. He made up his mind that he would survive. Somehow, to the amazement of the physician, he did not develop any infection, and he did survive. When the mortal danger was past, he again heard the doctor and his mother speaking quietly. The mother was told that since the fire had destroyed so much flesh in the lower part of his body, it would almost be better if he had died, since he was doomed to be a lifetime cripple with no use at all of his lower limbs.

“Once more the brave boy made up his mind. He would not be a cripple. He would walk. But unfortunately from the waist down, he had no motor ability. His thin legs just dangled there, all but lifeless. But the boy was determined to change all that.

“When he wasn’t in bed, he was confined to a wheelchair. One sunny day his mother wheeled him out into the yard to get some fresh air. This day, instead of sitting there, he threw himself from the chair. He pulled himself across the grass, dragging his legs behind him. He worked his way to the white picket fence bordering their lot. With great effort, he raised himself up on the fence. Then stake

by stake, he began dragging himself along the fence, resolved that he would walk. He started to do this every day until he wore a smooth path all around the yard beside the fence. There was nothing he wanted more than to develop life in those legs. And he sought the Lord's help. His favorite Bible verse was Isaiah 40:31: "*But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*"

“Ultimately through his daily leg massages, his iron persistence, his determined faith, and his resolute determination, he did develop the ability to stand up, then to walk haltingly, then to walk by himself – and then, to run. He began to walk to school, then to run to school, and to run for the sheer joy of running. Later in college he made the track team.

“Then, on June 16, 1934, in Princeton, New Jersey, this young man who was not expected to survive, who would surely never walk, who would never even hope to run – this determined young man, Dr. Glenn Cunningham, ran the world's fastest mile!”<sup>1</sup> And he would hold 3 more mile world records.

When everything seems impossible, when the bottom drops out of your life, when you are in situations that there seems to be no resolution or hope, there is a great temptation to listen to those around you and to give up. When it feels like you're up against a wall, hemmed in on every side with no escape from the enemy or the pursuer, faith and trust in God brings about some great surprises.

The Old Testament lesson for today is Exodus 14:19-31. In earlier chapters we are told how the people of Israel were following God's command to move out of Egypt and travel toward the land of Canaan. As they traveled, the “*Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and during the night He went in front of them in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel night and day*” (Ex. 13:21-22). You see, it was imperative that they get as far away as possible from the land of Egypt before Pharaoh changed his mind and began to pursue them to make them pay for the death of Egypt's first born, and to recapture them in order to continue to enslave them. In the process of leaving Egypt, the people of Israel brought great spoils from the Egyptians. But as Pharaoh's heart

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<sup>1</sup> (Canfield and Hansen's *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, [Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1993] pg. 259-260)

hardened, he thought that he could quickly re-capture Israel as they “wandered out in the desert.”

So as God led the people down the west side of what we know today as the Sinai Peninsula, Pharaoh gathered his army, his horsemen and all the chariots of Egypt to pursue Israel. Great was their anger, and dark were their thoughts toward God’s people. They had only one thought on their minds – revenge. Pharaoh took the strength of Egypt in pursuit of Israel, and it would not have been hard to follow them, since there were “*about 600,000 men, not counting women and children. A large number of other people and many sheep, goats, and cattle also went with them*” (Ex. 12:37-38). We are talking about almost 2 million people! Plus livestock! That many people and animals leaves a very clear path to follow, even so much that it is still evident today. The trench left in the land from that many people and animals is still visible, even from space.

God led the people of Israel to the very southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula where they came to a point that they were confronted by a mountainous cliff in front of them, the Red Sea to their right, the Desert of Sinai to their left, and the Egyptian army at the rear. Talk about impossible odds? “*When the Israelites saw the king (Pharaoh) and his army marching against them, they were terrified and cried out to the Lord for help*” (Ex. 14:10). The people were sure that Moses had led them into a trap where they would all be massacred. And I’m sure that Pharaoh thought that the God of Israel was a very poor general. What sensible god, or person, would lead people into an unescapable situation?

You ever been in a situation like that, when you are literally stuck between a rock and a hard place with no escape, no exit, and nowhere to run? It’s horrible. And so many people today face similar conditions and situations in their lives. Women and young children caught in sex trafficking. People caught up in addictions to alcohol or drugs or pornography or gambling. Men and women caught up in adulterous affairs. People trapped in homosexuality. Folks captured by depression or anxiety. Men and women losing their jobs because of a nation-wide shut down with no hope for income. Released prisoners abandoned at the doors of the prison without hope of job, or home, or food, or clothing. Spouses trapped in abusive relationships. People losing everything in the aftermath of tornados or

hurricanes or fires or earthquakes. Families left in the valley of the shadow of death of a loved one.

What do you do when the walls are closing in around you and there's nothing you can do to find escape? **The world** has a quick answer – just kill yourself! Just end it all and it will all be over. The world says that we need not endure any more garbage and we should just end it all. **But the Lord** has quite a different answer – “Trust in Me. Come to Me and watch what I can do to rescue you.” When the people of Israel found themselves in this impossible situation, they cried out to the Lord, and they hurried to Moses to get the answer. So the Lord told Moses to tell the people, *“Don't be afraid! Stand your ground, and you will see what the Lord will do to save you today; you will never see these Egyptians again. The Lord will fight for you, and all you have to do is keep still”* (Ex. 14:13-14).

You see, God knows where we're at. He knows our situation. He knows what we are up against and the problems we face and the conditions we have gotten ourselves into. Yet, when we put our faith and trust in Him to provide for us and protect us and lead us out of the dangerous situations, it is amazing to see what He can do. But God tells US, just like He did to the people of Israel, *“Don't be afraid! Stand your ground...all you have to do is to keep still.”*

So often we spend enormous amounts of energy and time and worry and heartache trying to get out of the situations we find ourselves in. We feel that since we've gotten ourselves into this mess, we are the ones that have to get ourselves out of this mess. But when we run out of resources, or support, or energy, or time, then what? There are some impossible situations that we just can't get ourselves out of without the help of the Lord. We just have to stand our ground, not be afraid and then keep still to see what God will do. And that's the hard part for us, because we want our hand in it somehow. But God says, “Let ME do it!”

By the time the people of Israel even reached the Red Sea, God already had the plan to get them out of trouble. God had already devised a plan to rid the people of their enemies. So God tells Moses, *“Tell the people to move forward”* (Ex. 14:15). Move forward? Where were they going to go? The cliffs in front of them, the empty desert to their left and the Egyptian army at their rear, their only option

was to go into the Red Sea! They didn't have boats to ferry them across. They weren't able to swim the distance. And what of their belongings, their children, and their animals? But God said, "Move out!"

The incredible thing, though, was that God also instructed Moses to "*Lift up your walking stick and hold it out over the sea. The water will divide and the Israelites will be able to walk through the sea on dry ground*" (Ex. 14:16). What? The walking stick was going to make all the difference and divide the waters of the sea? NO! God was inviting Moses AND the people to trust in Him, EVEN in the impossible chance that something could change. God invited them to trust HIM, more than any other person, more than any other imagination, more than anything that logic could construct, God said, "TRUST ME. I WILL DO THIS FOR YOU!"

God calls out to us, Trust Me when the last income check comes in the mail. Trust Me when coronavirus is raging all around you. Trust Me when the abuse is relentless. Trust Me when the house blows away, or when the stock market crashes, or when the lights go out in your company for the last time, or when the body is crying out for one more fix or one more drink. Trust Me when the security net is snatched away, when the police come knocking at your door, or when the news persistently gives nothing but doomsday messages. Trust Me when your doubts and fears seem to be coming true all around you. Trust Me when the judge throws the book at you with a long prison sentence. TRUST ME!

You see, we cannot see all of the options or possibilities that the Lord has already provided for us. We cannot see the miraculous deliverance that is just around the corner if we but stand strong in our faith in Him. We cannot see the transformation that can take place in our minds and bodies and situations if only we keep still and let God go to work for us. We're surrounded by the impossible and we are blinded to what God can do. So God gently tells us again and again, "Trust Me, and I will deliver you!" Yet it is so hard for us to do this when the enemy is right there at our heels, ready to deliver the deadly blow that will end it all. It is so hard because our eyes are on the situation and not on the Lord. So God says, "Look at Me, trust Me, and let Me deliver you."

The people of Israel did just that. They trusted in God's deliverance. And the next thing they

knew, the pillar of fire and cloud moved from in front to behind the people, between them and the Egyptian army (14:19). A strong east wind began to blow back the waters in the Red Sea (14:21). The waters piled up on either side allowing the people to walk through on dry ground (14:22). And when the Egyptian army tried to pursue them, the Lord caused their chariot wheels to get caught up in mud and come off of the chariots (14:25). The most fearsome army of Egypt is now thrown into a panic because the Lord is fighting against them, but they are already committed and there was nothing they could do. And *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Hold out your hand over the sea, and the water will come back over the Egyptians and their chariots and drivers. So Moses held out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the water returned to its normal level. The Egyptians tried to escape from the water, but the Lord threw them into the sea. The water returned and covered the chariots, the drivers, and all the Egyptian army that had followed the Israelites into the sea; not one of them was left’* (14:26-28). The pursuers were now the victims of God’s wrath. The army was completely defeated. What seemed to the Egyptian army to be a bloodbath victory became their own doom. God overpowered them, even the strongest and most courageous. The people of Israel who put their trust and faith in the Lord God, were rescued.

This event is so unusual, so unnatural, and so amazing, that scientists and skeptics and naysayers have done their best to debunk and disprove it. They say that there is no way that the waters of the Red Sea can possibly pile up like that to form dry ground. They explain that what is called the Red Sea is really a Reed Sea that is shallow and easily crossed. They do their best to explain how this account just could not have happened. But what of the destruction of the Egyptian army?

Recently explorers and other scientists have found shallows in the Red Sea that still become exposed today and cause ships to become stranded when the wind blows from the east. They have discovered Egyptian chariots and armor and shields lying at the bottom of the Red sea along this shallow area. Right there at the south end of the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea proves to be the site of the crossing of the people of Israel from Egyptian controlled territory as they headed to the land of Midian. The archeological evidence shows clearly the path of the people of Israel on their journey.

This seems impossible to us because we have never seen something like this happen before. But neither had the people of Israel, nor the army of Egypt. It was the first time that God had held back waters for the people of Israel to cross a body of water, but it was not the last time. Because the people put their faith and trust in the Lord God, and let Him bring the deliverance, they were able to see the glory and the power of the Lord their God. And they were delivered from the hand of the Egyptians.

So it's no wonder that the people of Israel celebrated with Moses. Listen to what they said (READ Exodus 15:1-11, 18).

So I ask you, is there anything that the Lord cannot do? Is there anything too difficult for the Lord to accomplish? Is there a limit to what God can do in the midst of our own lives? To my knowledge there are only two things that the Lord God cannot do: 1) He cannot lie and 2) He cannot break a promise that He has made, for the Lord our God is faithful and true in all His ways. But in terms of accomplishing anything, nothing is outside of God's ability to accomplish. What we see as impossible is totally possible with the Lord our God. The addicted can become clean. The abused can find relief. The trapped can find freedom. The destitute can find abundance. The sick can become well, the broken can heal, and the anxious can find peace. The destroyed is rebuilt, the lost are restored, the hopeless find hope, and the prisoners are set free. Injustices are reconciled, wars are ended, nations make peace with each other, and the enemy is transformed as trust is given to the Lord God.

You see, "*the earth is the Lords and all it contains; the world and all who dwell in it*" (Psalm 24:1). Since the world belongs to the Lord, since He is powerful enough to create the world and all it contains, then He certainly can do what we consider to be the impossible, even in the midst of our own lives. Jesus proved it in all of the miracles that He performed, giving sight to the blind, casting out demons, loosening the mute's tongue, calming the storm, feeding 10,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish, healing paralytics, healing diseases, raising the dead to new life, and curing disorders like leprosy, scoliosis (woman with a hunchback), birth defects (man with withered hand), blood disorders (woman who bled for 12 years) and epilepsy (boy with a demon).

But all of this demands that we trust in the Lord and allow Him to bring the solution to the situations in our lives. We have to give up on our own pursuits of answers, and we have to give them all to the Lord so that He can do the impossible and He can receive all the glory in it.

So cancer is not a problem for the Lord our God, for He can heal it as you trust in Him. Unemployment is not a problem for God, because He can supply you with a better job as you trust in Him. COPD is not a problem for God, for He gives you the breath of life. Covid19 is not a problem for God, because He can bring you out of it as you trust in Him. Persecution is not too much for the Lord God because He can use it to transform even the persecutors as you trust in Him. Prison is not an issue for God because He can refine and direct you into a deeper faith in Him as you trust in Him. Addictions are not more powerful than the Lord God because He can lead you to new life as you trust in Him. Amputations are not a problem for God because He can use you, even as you are to work for Him as you trust in Him. Even death is not an issue for God because He has given us eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord as we put our trust in Him.

There is nothing that is impossible or too much for God to do to rescue you and bring you into the safety of His loving care. And God will go to the ends of the earth to work for you and through you so that all may come to know His great power and His great love for anyone who will put their trust and faith in Him. When everything seems to be impossible for us, there is God, waiting for us to trust in Him and walk with Him and follow His commands so that He might be glorified through the deliverance He provides. *“The Lord will fight for you, and all you have to do is keep still”* (Ex. 14:14), trusting that He knows where you’re at and what you’re going through, and trusting that He can bring about the most outstanding solution to the things you face in your life as you trust in Him.

So never give up trusting the Lord our God. Give your heart to Him through Jesus Christ our Savior and He will provide for you, He will protect you, He will direct your life, and He will bring about a great deliverance to you, even if it all seems impossible. No matter what, trust in the Lord our God, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.