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Dry Land and Drowned Haters

Text: Hebrews 11:29

The story is told of a young seminarian who was in an Old Testament class and the rather liberal professor was challenging the way the Red Sea event is typically told and understood. The professor said, "The Red Sea can be translated 'Sea of Reeds' and in the days of Moses it was a shallow, knee-deep swampland. Therefore, it was not a big deal for Moses to cross the Red Sea. The young seminarian said, "What a miracle." The prof said, "Perhaps you didn't understand me, young man. There was nothing supernatural here. The Sea of Reeds was shallow enough to walk across." The young man said, "Yes, but the Bible says the Egyptians drowned...in shallow, knee-deep water. What a miracle!!"

Both Moses and the pursuing Egyptians entered the Red Sea. Moses and his party passed *through* it. The Egyptians drowned *in* it. We must turn to Exodus 14 for the backstory. On the part of Israel:

1. There was a mistrust of leadership (v.10-12)
2. There was fear and an inability to trust God to work in their circumstances (v.13-14)

To this fear-ridden, mistrusting-of-leadership people, God (through Moses) gives a preposterous command.

Before they are commanded to march into the Red Sea, note a prior command.

Go forward. The text does not allow me to turn that line into the beginning speech about looking ahead and setting goals. Simply note that verse 15 is a call to quit whining and go in one direction: forward.

Illus.

There are two animals on Australia's coat of arms, the formal symbol of the Commonwealth of Australia—the kangaroo and the emu. The country chose these animals because they can't walk or jump backward. As such, they symbolize the nation's ever forward movement. What God tells Israel

is that God wants them kangaroo and emu-like. They are not to walk or jump backwards.

Arthur W. Pink, in his commentary on the book of Hebrews, suggests that there are three degrees of faith.

1. Faith that *receives*
2. Faith that *reckons*
3. Faith that *risks*¹

This event is a *second Passover*, as the children of Israel's pass over the floor of the Red Sea on dry land.

There are at least four lessons we might extract from this memorable story.

1. God keeps His promises.
2. There is a time to move forward
3. There is time to stand still
4. The promise-making, promise-keeping God whom we serve displays His power (see the salvation- Exodus 14:13, 31)

Charles Spurgeon preached on verse 15 of Exodus 14 and titled the sermon *Forward! Forward! Forward!* In the sermon, Spurgeon said, *Far be from me ever to say a word in disparagement of the holy, happy, heavenly exercise of prayer. But, beloved, there are times when prayer is*

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, Volume 2 (Baker, 1963), 834

not enough- when prayer itself is out of season...When we have prayed over a matter to a certain degree, it then becomes sinful to tarry any longer; our plain duty is to carry our desires into action, and having asked God's guidance, and having received power from on high, to go at once to our duty without any longer deliberation or delay.²

The enemies of Israel, the haters, assumed they could cross the sea on dry land as well. They thought they could piggyback on the miraculous provision of God for Israel (Exodus 14:22-23). You have some haters who think that whatever is provided for *you* will accrue to *them*. 'Tis not so. The people of God were *delivered*. The enemies were *drowned*.

Look at what happens to the Egyptians:

1. God troubled them (v. 24)
2. God took the wheels off their chariots (v. 25)
3. God worked, visibly, on behalf of the Israelites (v. 25)
4. The Lord, Himself, through the actions of Moses, drowned (overthrew) the Egyptians (v. 26-27).

Beloved, I remind you that the life of faith is the life which casts its full weight upon a credible God who sometimes issues outlandish commands.

² Charles H. Spurgeon, "Forward! Forward! Forward!" (No. 548), *Metropolitan Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 10:13

When we say “yes” to this God we will see God not only change us and our circumstances. We will *also* often see God handle our haters. The life of faith is an obedient life. Twice, in this text, Moses is given a clear, direct command. Note his compliance, his obedience.

1. Exodus 14:16, 21a

2. Exodus 14:26, 27

While we study Moses and admire his obedience, let’s not get the story twisted. This narrative is not ultimately about the courage and compliance of Moses or the resolve of the Israelites. No, this is about a delivering, sovereign God!!

Isaiah asks the rhetorical question,

Are You not the One who dried up the sea,

The waters of the great deep;

That made the depths of the sea a road

For the redeemed to cross over? - Isaiah 51:10

Closing

The summary of the Red Sea event is verses 30 and 31 of Exodus 14.

1. The event was Lord’s doing (v.30)

2. Israel was given the opportunity to see God at work, in their behalf (v. 31a,13). See also Romans 4:5, where Paul writes of the importance of our not adding our work to God's saving acts. God is at work!
3. This led to fear of the Lord and belief in the Lord **and** His servant Moses. Remember how these people grumbled and complained about Moses' leadership (v. 11-12)? They've now seen God at work as God used Moses as God's instrument. Moses is the mediator. You and I are witnesses of the work of the God who turns the sea into dry land and who drowns the haters and handles our enemies!

Hear the good news. One greater than Moses is here and He, Jesus the Christ, brings us out of our bondage and sets our feet on dry ground, delivering us from the sea of sin that would overwhelm and engulf us.

Illus.

Nathan Cole was a rural farmer in Middletown, CT. I

In October 1740, Nathan Cole went to hear the English Methodist George Whitfield preach. Nathan Cole said,

...my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by God's blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.³

As you've heard this story, again, of God's power and Moses' faith I trust that it gave you a heart wound and if self- trust is your foundation, I hope that foundation has been broken up.

Amen

³ George Leon Walker, *Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England* (New York: Silver, Burnett, and Company, 1897), 89-92