

You Need Only Be Still

¹³ Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." - Exodus 14:13, 14

After the children of Israel left Egypt in the days of the pharaohs, but before they were safely out of danger, they found themselves trapped between the Red Sea and the chariots of Egypt. It seemed like a great time to panic. Like them, being still in the presence of God, waiting for Him to deliver us, runs against the grain of our sinful, fearful hearts. When surrounded on every side, what besides being still is a man prone to do?

He Might Exhibit a Tendency toward Cowardice. To the Israelites, surrender seemed attractive. Perhaps, if they refused to put up any fight, Pharaoh might have mercy on them and simply allow them to resume their roles as slaves. After all, slavery is not so bad as long as you're alive, and your oppressors still allow you to eat of the "fish ... also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic." (see Numbers 11:5).

How many times does a man battle some secret sin in silence because the cost of overcoming it is too high? Accountability to another will mar the image he has worked so hard to erect. Or, the struggle is too demanding. The world invites us to surrender to our basest sins and remain slaves. "You have battled this all your life. When are you going to quit beating yourself up and see that it's just a part of how you're wired? It's not sin, it's sickness. It's not your fault that you're just a product of bad parenting or a faulty gene pool. After all, God made you the way you are."

He Might Exhibit a Tendency toward Busyness. These days, rather than to wait on the LORD in stillness, many opt to do anything that will buffer them from appearing that they are doing nothing. Time is precious, and we are right to not want to waste it. But, is time spent waiting on God to reveal a way the same as time wasted? To some, stillness smacks of idleness or of lacking the courage to act. But, stillness is *NOT* "doing nothing." When the occasion calls for stillness, it is exactly the right thing to do.

Actually, staying busy in the wrong way is a sure way to waste time. Working with the wrong tools is a good way to tear something up. Being in a hurry around machinery can get a person hurt. Haste makes waste. Measure twice, cut once. These observations from the world of labor ring true in the realm of the spirit as well.

"Time is precious, but there are occasions when the best use we can make of it, is to let it run on. If time flies, that is no reason why I am always to fly." - Charles Spurgeon

He Might Exhibit a Tendency toward Presumption. If televangelists had been present in that ancient crowd, they would have known exactly what to do. "Expect your miracle!" Of course, they would probably have anticipated the wrong miracle and charged right into the throes of the Egyptian army. After all, not even the most imaginative modern televangelist could have anticipated what God really had in mind.

I could share many experiences of God bailing me out of tough situations when I was young. I have become less dependent on such deliverances, not because I doubt what God can do, but

because the years have found me less prone to land in those kinds of situations. I would like to say that it has always been a matter of maturing gracefully, but I cannot. Sometimes, because God bailed me out in the past, I presumed He always would. Sometimes, it is grace and nothing less than grace that allows a person to violently hit a wall. A fellow can learn a lot peeling himself off a wall.

He Might Exhibit a Tendency toward Rebellion. The Israelites turned on Moses, attacking him with sarcasm: "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?" (Exodus 14:11). Outside every major city in Egypt was a stately burial ground called a necropolis, or "city of the dead." Today, among our first thoughts of ancient Egypt are embalming and pyramids. After the sarcasm came, "We told you so!" "Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'?" (Exodus 14:12). When bad things happen, and we have enough sense to not shake our fists at God, the next best thing is to find a leader and blame him.

All these tendencies that reflect the human aversion to stillness share the same pathology - chronic forgetfulness of a faithful God. Sure, centuries had passed since God uttered His promises to the patriarchs, but only days had passed since the plagues on Egypt proved God's devotion to His nation. By the way, there was still that matter of a pillar of cloud by which God led them during the day and the fire by which He led them at night. *YAHWEH* had not gone anywhere. These people whined in the very shadow of God's presence.

Your whining, believer, is no less inappropriate. After he got them still, Moses told the people, "Stop whining and start walking" (granted, a rough paraphrase). In their stillness, God told Moses exactly what He must do. The waiting was over. *YAHWEH* delivered them through the sea. He destroyed their enemies. And the people feared (revered) the LORD.

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