

## **Red Sea Rules 5 and 6-Stay Calm and Live by Faith**

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In Exodus 14:13-14, after the people panic at seeing Pharaoh's army advancing, Moses told them, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord...the Lord will fight for you, while you keep silent". The people were ready to give up and surrender, but Moses was telling them to wait and by faith trust God to work in their lives. Red Sea kind of problems are not solvable by you and me. Psalm 37:7-8 says to rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and don't give up. 107 times in the Old Test. And 43 times in the New Test. We are told to "fear not" because God is with us. Fear is an emotion or a feeling, and we are to live by faith and not feelings. Appearances are that we may have good reason to fear, but we have a stronger ally on our side than the Egyptian army. Therefore move from fear to faith, because "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Does that mean that we do nothing? Of course not, we read in the next verse Exodus 14:15 "Tell the children of Israel to go forward". Crisis type problems are not solved easily, but we can do something every day. Therefore Red sea Rule #6 is TAKE THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP BY FAITH. Live one day at a time, and do some simple logical thing every day, even if its just getting organized. Jesus told His followers in Matt.6:34, "Don't be anxious about tomorrow...live one day at a time".

Faith is one of the most used words in Christianity, but I doubt that many Christians really fully understand what Biblical faith is. Fortunately, Hebrews 11:1 gives us a great definition of faith, and then proceeds to illustrate faith in Biblical examples throughout the rest of the chapter. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen." By this he means that the following examples in ch.11 illustrate that they believed God's Word so strongly that it was a reality to them even though it had not happened yet. Being a reality to them, it convicted them to respond accordingly. There is no other explanation for Noah building the ark when it had never flooded before, or Abraham leaving his home to go to a foreign unknown land. The only reason they would respond so radically is the firm conviction that what God had said would definitely happen. The opposite of this kind of faith was shown in Numbers 13-14 by Israel in the wilderness at Kadesh-Barnea. God told the people He would give them the land and dispossess the evil Canaanites. God led them to the southern border of Canaan, and commanded them to go in, but they hesitated. After spies brought the scouting report that the Canaanites were numerous, big, and well armed, the people of Israel balked, and would not go in to the Promised Land. Their unbelief was so severe that they even desired to go back to Egypt (Nu.14:4). They knew of God's presence and power because they had seen His glory at Mt. Sinai and heard His voice as thunder when God gave them the Ten Commandments. They had seen awesome miracles as God devastated Egypt through the ten plagues, and then parted the Red Sea so they could escape the Egyptian army. God had provided them manna from heaven and water in a barren land. They clearly had what we can call "intellectual assent" of God's power and presence, yet they did not believe in God in such a way that they were committed to respond to the risk of going into the land. The author of Hebrews differentiates between true Biblical faith that has faith in God's promises and commands such that it responds as if it is a reality to them, and worldly faith that is nothing more than intellectual assent.

### Winners and Losers

Nothing seems so important in the world we live in as winning. I remember Patton's great speech in the academy award winning movie with George C. Scott. As Patton was encouraging his troops, he said, "Americans love a winner, and they will not tolerate a loser!" In Hebrews 11:1-31, the author tells the stories of sixteen great winners. They were heroes of the Bible who were delivered from peril, won great victories, and all of them were empowered to be winners during their mortal lives. These are the guys we want to be like along with all the glory that goes with it. We see ourselves as David slaying Goliath, or Joseph who saves Israel, or Moses who parts the Red Sea. We are typically not interested in being like Isaiah who was sawn in two, or Jeremiah who was beaten and imprisoned. Nevertheless, there is a major pivot in verse 35 that tells us these poor saps (in the eyes of men) were equally approved by God because of their faith. The astounding, shocking but obvious truth is that God has not promised wholesale relief, deliverance, or miracles on call in this life for all His people at all times in every situation. Not all of us will be winners in this life from the world's point of view.

### Dynamic Certainty

The Bible is full of example after example that biblical faith is a dynamic certainty in God's Word. It is a future certainty of the future promises of God as if they were in the present. It is a present certainty that brings the invisible God in view such that you act now based on that belief. By faith all the heroes of the Bible responded to God's Word as certainty, and in this way

they were “approved by God”, and He declared them righteous. Each of these characters was willing to accept the worst the world has to offer-death, because of their trust in the best God has to offer-the final resurrection unto eternal life.

In Hebrews 11:32-34, he listed six more obvious men of faith-Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel. Each lived in very difficult times in which faith was very rare, each battled huge odds, each stood alone in their faith, and each of these men had flawed character. I think the thing that surprises most Christians when they finally study these stories in depth is that these supposed heroes were not great men in and of themselves, and they were men of lusts and passions as we are. We can relate to these characters. We may be pessimistic like Gideon, or selfish like Samson, or lustful like David. Nevertheless, by their faith they were of great use to the Lord, and God blessed them. Verse 33 lists how God empowered them to conquer kingdoms, administer justice, obtain promises. Verse 34 tells us they shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames, and escaped the sword. Verse 35 tells the power they gained from God of great strength, mighty in battle, routed armies, and brought back the dead. The point is that God can do these things, has done them, and may do them in your life. God responds to faith.

#### The Great Pivot—but Everybody Else

The pivot to a different kind of power received by faith occurs in verse 35. The previous examples of faith received temporal mortal deliverance, and were winners even by the world’s demented perspective, but they were rare and not the norm. The action switches to “others” or everybody else who was not delivered, but received the power by faith to persevere through adverse situations, but did not escape them. Everybody else had victory too, but it was spiritual-the only kind that God guarantees. The emphasis changes to perseverance. How could anyone persevere through scourgings, chains, imprisonment, being stoned, and threatened with death when by simply shutting up or recanting they could be released? Faith empowered them to obey God and persevere to the end. They did “not accept their release”, but continued to preach a very unpopular message of imminent judgment. Their faith empowered them to persevere because they were looking for a “better resurrection”, meaning not just a resuscitation of their mortal life like those in the beginning of v.35, but the final resurrection unto eternal life. The Greek word that our English version translates resurrection is anastasis which simply means rising. They had no particular word for “the” final resurrection, so the author differentiated between the raising of the widow’s son by Elijah and the ultimate final resurrection unto eternal life by calling it “a better resurrection”. These people in view in v.35-40 were looking for something better than just physical temporal victories. They had an eternal perspective looking forward to that ultimate resurrection into a perfect eternal body instead of just some temporary resuscitation like Lazarus received. The world was not worthy of these faithful men because they were righteous and holy in God’s view. Just as these faithful believers did not deserve to be tortured and killed, the world in its evil and violence was not deserving of their righteousness.

#### Results of Faithfulness

What were the results for these faithful people? 1. They all died before the ultimate promise of the Messiah was fulfilled. They all died before Jesus came. They lived in hope of God’s great promise which was the means of their salvation and forgiveness. They knew not when or exactly how, but that God would do it. 2. They were all commended for their faith by God. He honors their faith, and will reward it in the end. The people he is mentioning in v.36-39 did not receive what was promised in their lifetime. By this he means they all died before Jesus came. The great promise of God to all generations was the Savior who would redeem mankind. They died before Jesus was crucified, but God had forgiven their sins based on what Jesus would do in the future as Paul wrote in Romans 3:25, “in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed (before Christ)”. God looked forward to the cross of Christ for the full payment of the guilt of sin incurred by the people of faith in the Old Testament. Heb.11:40 says that God had provided something better for us, meaning that when Christ came He brought the New Covenant of grace which is a better covenant than the author has been trying to get his audience to embrace throughout the book of Hebrews.

The last phrase of v.40 delivers a perplexing statement, “so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” First of all we can see that the “us” refers to the beneficiaries of the New Covenant, which is all that have lived during and after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. “They” refers to the Old Testament believers that died before Christ came. When he writes “apart from us they should not” he means that we will all experience being made perfect together in the resurrection that is unto eternal life. Another way of saying verse 39-40 would be to paraphrase it by saying, “The Old Testament believers gained the approval of God by their faith, but their sins were not atoned for until Christ was crucified, and this happened after they died; because God provided the New Covenant in our lifetime, so that we could all be resurrected into perfect eternal bodies together.” This fits in the context of his previous “better resurrection” statements of v.35 and his statements about Christ’s sacrifice and offering as perfecting for all time those who are sanctified in 10:14.

In 1 Peter 1:10-11, Peter is discussing the salvation of our souls, and he wrote, "As to this salvation the O.T. prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry seeking to know what person or time the Spirit within them was indicating...It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which have now been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you". The guys in the O.T. found out that the Messiah would not come in their lifetime, but what He would do would benefit them also. They served the Lord just as Abraham did, not for benefits in their lifetime, but like Abraham they were looking for "a better country, that is a heavenly one"(Hebrews 11:16). Therefore, with us they will be blessed with the "better resurrection" in which we will all be made perfect.

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