

Red Sea Rule #8-Trust God to Deliver in His Own Unique Way

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In Exodus 14, the Hebrews who had just been liberated from slavery in Egypt found themselves in a very unexpected precarious position. They had assumed that God, having miraculously freed them would now make their way easy to the Promised Land. Instead, they were camped in the harsh wilderness with the deep Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's ruthless army coming from behind them. There was no way out, and they cried out in fear. Turning against Moses they yelled at him, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you brought us out to this place to die?" This was a crisis situation cleverly designed to appear as an unsolvable problem. How were they going to get out of this trap? I imagine not one single person there expected what would happen. They were asking "what is that old man doing standing on the hill raising his rod over the Sea?" In Exodus 14, we read that God parted the water so that it became like walls on the right and left. It became an avenue for them and later on an ambush for the bad guys. It was a gateway for God's people but a graveyard to his adversaries. In these stories we find that God's eternal infinite omniscient perspective is beyond our imagination. It is like the prophet Isaiah quoted God in Isaiah 55 verse eight, "My thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways." God does not have standardized solutions to problems. All of God's solutions are unique, special, and Taylor made for each trial. God's ways are truly mysterious to mankind. It reminds me of the story of the young boy who came home from Sunday School after receiving the lesson on the Red Sea crossing. His mother asked what he learned. The boy said that Moses parachuted behind enemy lines with the 82nd Airborne division to free Israel in Egypt. Then at the Red Sea they built pontoon bridges to cross while Pharaoh's army was held off by Abrams tanks and artillery fire. Moses called in air strikes by F35 fighter bombers to wipe out the Egyptian chariots, and the Hebrews were saved. His mother asked him, "Is that really what they said happened?" The boy said, "No but if I told you what they said you'd never believe it!" This is why authors of the Bible like Paul wrote in Romans 11:33-36, "How unsearchable are God's judgments and unfathomable his ways, for who has known the mind of the Lord?" Moses told Israel "Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord". I think if he had told them what was coming they never would have believed it. Therefore, Red Sea Rule #8 is TRUST GOD TO DELIVER IN HIS OWN UNIQUE UNEXPECTED WAY. God does not have standardized predictable solutions to problems. When the prophet Habakkuk persistently prayed for God to do something about the corruption and idolatry in Jerusalem, God finally answered, "I am doing something that if I told you, you wouldn't believe it." Then when God told him He was raising up the Babylonian army to destroy Jerusalem, Habakkuk said, "I don't believe it!"

God Delivers Three Ways

First God delivers overtly through miracles like parting the Red Sea so Israel could cross on dry ground. Consider the scope of this miracle that 3 million people cross in one day. They would have to cross not in rows of four or five or six but at least 5,000 abreast. This means the sea was parted by several miles wide. Critics ask, "Since God routinely did so many awesome miracles all through the Bible, why doesn't He part some Red Seas for me? Where are my miracles?" I'd like to bring back some dead people, stop the sun, and send a plague of locusts upon ISIS. The reality is that there aren't very many miracles in the Bible for the huge time covered. Consider the 2200 years from Abraham in Genesis 12 to John in the book of Revelation. There were only four short periods of time in biblical history when miracles were the norm. These were all times of great transition in which miracles were necessary to bring about the great changes: 1. The Exodus and conquering the Promised Land, 2. The prophets, 3. The ministry of Christ for about three years, 4. The early formation of the church in the first century. Most of history God has helped his people in ordinary providential ways. For instance, it is a fact that the greatest growth in the church was during the greatest persecution, which was from 65 to 310 A.D. Imagine 120 believers in Acts chapter 1 grew to many millions during the persecution that ended in 312 A.D. when the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian.

The second way God delivers is covertly through His providence. Usually God's unseen hand is guiding, guarding, and arranging circumstances. A great example of this can be found in the New Testament book of Philemon. Onesimus was a runaway slave and stole from his master Philemon. Amazingly, when he fled 1500 miles away from Colossae to Rome he met Paul who led him to Christ. Now that he was a Christian, what would he do about the crimes he had committed? How could he ever be free and forgiven? By God's providence, the man who led him to Christ in Rome was Paul, and Paul just happened to be a friend and mentor to Philemon, so he could intercede for Onesimus. Therefore a crook was reformed, Onesimus was forgiven and freed, and Philemon was a great witness of mercy and grace. By God's great providence we are blessed with this great story of forgiveness, reconciliation, and freedom. History tells us that the freed slave Onesimus became the Bishop of Ephesus.

The third way God delivers is mysteriously in ways we don't understand or even get at the time. By this I mean that many Bible characters are clearly delivered not physically, not materially, but a greater deliverance into the heavenly realm. In

Paul's last letter of 2Timothy, he was writing from jail awaiting execution but he wrote in 2 Tim.4:18, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work...and bring me to heaven". How so since he was beheaded? Paul knew he would be delivered immediately into the presence of the Lord. In Hebrews 11, the members of the Hall of Fame of faith are listed along with how each was miraculously delivered, but in 11:35-38 there is a pivot—"but others were tortured, scourged, and slain". All of this group was approved by God because of their faith and delivered into heaven. Why did God empower David to slay Goliath, but allow Stephen to be stoned to death in Acts 7:59? The answer can be found in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord, but the things revealed belong to us".

The Providence of God

The providence of God is His unseen hand guiding, guarding, and arranging natural circumstances so that the outcome, one way or another turns out for good. Romans 8:28 is clear that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God". You can find this happening in every Bible story. Jacob was called the deceiver and his brother wanted to kill him, so his mother sent him to live with Uncle Laban who was the biggest crook in Mesopotamia. While living 20 years with that horrible man, Jacob wondered why God would allow it, but Jacob came away humble, honest, and subservient—a better person ready to serve the Lord. Joseph was beaten and thrown in a pit by his brothers, and then sold into slavery. His masters wife lied about him and he was thrown in a dungeon, and I'm sure Joseph wondered how all that could turn out for good. Nevertheless through these natural circumstances Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt and was able to save his entire family in the great famine—even his evil brothers. They feared his revenge, but Joseph said, "You meant it for evil, but God used it for good".

Most people take all their circumstances as natural events that are just coincidences, accidents, and even misfortunes, but God's people pay attention to their circumstances and give God His due. James 4:13 explains it well, "Come now you who say today or tomorrow we shall go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business...yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow...instead you ought to say if the Lord wills we shall live and also do this or that". Jesus made this clear by teaching the parable of the rich man in Luke 12:13-23. Jesus warned the people against a shallow materialistic attitude by telling the story of a rich farmer who had a great crop production, and put all his faith in his possessions. The farmer said to himself I will build more barns to hoard more and more for myself, and then I will be completely secure and say to my soul, "Soul you have many goods laid up for many years to come so eat drink and be merry". But God said, "You fool, this very night your soul is required of you, and someone else will own all your stuff". Jesus was teaching His disciples to entrust their lives to the Lord and not to all the things of the world. Therefore, in Exodus 14 when the people saw the Egyptian army with its iron chariots, the Israelites were expected to trust God to deliver them in His own unique way. I love it that Jesus' disciples were so candid in the Gospel accounts when they didn't understand what Jesus was doing, especially His teaching about the crucifixion and resurrection.

God's Unique Way of Saving Us from Our Sin

In Mark 8:31-33, the impetuous Peter actually rebuked the Lord Jesus when He first taught that He must be crucified. Peter and the disciples had all left everything to follow Jesus and now Jesus was telling them He would be crucified? No way the brothers would expect or allow that to happen! But for emphasis Jesus responded to Peter in the harshest way, "Get behind me Satan, for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's". Over and over all four Gospels state they did not expect the crucifixion or resurrection. The longest and clearest example is in Luke 24. They were all shocked when Jesus was arrested and crucified, and they all thought it was over. Even when they went and saw the empty tomb Sunday morning they didn't understand. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were so clueless that they did not even recognize Christ when He walked with them, but their discussion revealed their disappointment that He was dead, and they had no hope for the resurrection. It totally blew their minds when Jesus taught them that all the Old Testament prophecies predicted His death and resurrection. Then Jesus opened their eyes and they could see that it was Him, and their hearts and minds understood for the first time God's plan of the redemption of mankind through the atoning work of Christ on the cross.

The most mysterious, unexpected, and unique deliverance of all was the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 2:6-14 when he wrote that God's wisdom is not anything like man's wisdom. All the rulers and self righteous people of this fallen world do not understand God's ways. God's plan for the redemption of mankind is a total mystery to the unbelieving human race, because apart from God man cannot accept or understand the things of the Spirit of God. Therefore, let us be spiritually appraised by the Spirit of God and expect God to deliver us also from our crisis situations in God's own unique way. Have you been through or are you going through difficult situations that are cleverly disguised by the adversary of God as unsolvable problems? **TRUST GOD TO DELIVER IN HIS OWN UNIQUE UNEXPECTED WAY!**

Charlie Taylor