

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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God Calls the People Out of Egypt

Exodus 14:15-25, 30-31

Key Verse: Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians (Exodus 14:30).

The phrase “between the devil and the deep blue sea” became well-known as the title of a popular song recorded in 1932 by Cab Calloway. The concept has been around much longer, at least since the Israelites found themselves caught *between the Pharaoh and the deep Red Sea*.

Here’s the story. Pharaoh has finally relented and allowed Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. But almost as soon as they start the journey, Pharaoh changes his mind. The loss of tens of thousands of slaves, and the free labor they provide, proves more than Pharaoh can tolerate. So, he and his army are soon in hot pursuit of Moses and the Israelites.

The Israelites have come to the banks of the Red Sea, where they’ve set up camp at a place called Pi Hahiroth. Suddenly, they see a cloud of dust on the horizon, then the approach of some 600 chariots. With Pharaoh’s army in hot pursuit and the Red Sea blocking their escape, the Israelites find themselves in what looks to be an impossible and hopeless situation.

Now, the miracle that God provided in parting the Red Sea is one of the most significant events in the Bible. The exodus is at the heart of Israel’s history as a people uniquely called by God. The exodus has been inspiration for oppressed and marginalized people through the ages, who have seen in it God’s promise of liberation. What God did at the Red Sea also speaks to anyone whose situation seems impossible and hopeless. Perhaps you are facing a “Red Sea” in your life—things look hopeless. There is good news for you in this story of God’s deliverance.

When you find yourself “between the Pharaoh and the deep Red Sea,” remember:

1. God may be calling you to move out of fear into faith. With the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh’s army behind, God said to Moses: “Tell the Israelites to go forward” (v. 15). It is all too easy, when circumstances seem impossible, to be paralyzed by fear. So often, God’s answer comes—deliverance comes—when we answer God’s call to “go forward.” Someone has said “God cannot steer a parked car.” Often, God’s guidance comes only when we begin to move forward in faith. Move out of fear into faith.

When you find yourself “between the Pharaoh and the deep Red Sea,” remember:

2. Trust God to protect you until God parts your Red Sea. When the Israelites began their journey, God led them by a cloud that moved in front of them. But then, when they found themselves in this desperate situation, the Bible says: “The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them” (v. 19).

At first, the Israelites might have thought, as they watched the cloud float away, that God was deserting them. Actually, the cloud moved behind them to *protect* them from the Egyptian army (v. 20).

Notice, God had not yet parted the Red Sea. While the people waited for their miracle, God was protecting them and watching over them. We can trust God to protect us until the day that he parts our Red Sea!

When you find yourself “between the Pharaoh and the deep Red Sea,” remember:

3. Give God the glory!

Whenever you face situations that seem impossible, realize that God intends to work things out so that (1) others will see God’s work in your life and give Him glory, and (2) you will learn to trust God more fully. Here’s how the story concludes: “Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses” (vv. 30-31).

As a Christian in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition, I do not believe that God *causes* all the difficult things that come our way. For example, when an innocent family dies in a terrible car crash, I don’t believe that our God reached down and turned the steering wheel, sending their van over the side of a bridge. God doesn’t cause all the difficult things that happen to us. But whatever happens, our God is able and willing to bring *good* from them, if we will trust Him.

That is the wonderful promise of Romans 8:28, that “in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him.” Even when we find ourselves between the Pharaoh and the deep Red Sea, our God is able to turn our situation *for our good* and *for His glory!*

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