

**Exodus 14:15-21**

15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. 16 But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. 17 Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers." 19 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. 20 It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

The Bible reveals the power of God. I am sure you know the stories; they are some of our favorites from Sunday school and Vacation Bible School. The stories of Exodus as they escape from slavery in Egypt. Jacob and his family join Joseph and seventy people grow rapidly over the next 430 years. Pharaoh was afraid of their growth and they become slaves and were treated cruelly. Moses became God's servant. Moses is one of the greatest biblical heroes but he was not perfect. He killed an Egyptian and ran away. God called him to return and help free the people. Moses questioned God repeatedly. God performed miracles to get Moses to finally believe. Moses still hesitated proclaiming that he is not a good enough speaker. It is when Moses obeyed God that he was able to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and become a great biblical hero. Now they are on their journey to freedom and they are trapped. The Egyptian army used chariots and caught up to them, and there is a body of water in front of them. The Israelites are scared. They forget all about the power of God, blame Moses for leading them out to die in the wilderness, some even claim that they would be better off as slaves.

The Scripture shows us the glory of God. The power of God over nature is revealed as a bold victory is won by God. The reason the Bible shows God proclaiming "I am the LORD" is because the conflict is one of theology. The actual conflict is between claims of divinity. The Pharaoh is made into a god by the people and is worshipped as such by the people. The real battle is between God and Pharaoh. With a large body of water in front of them and an army that has caught up to them God instructs Moses to go forward. Moses follows the word of God, stretches out his hand as the sea divides. The Israelites flee on solid ground. God did the work and God proclaims it is due to the true divine power that the Egyptians shall know who the one true God is. Therefore, God proclaims "I am the Lord."

A pattern develops in Exodus. The people are not satisfied with what they have. They have witnessed God's glory personally, but instead of gratitude and appreciation, they complain. In chapter 15 they complain there is no water. The water they had was bitter and they could not drink it. The people complain against Moses and he cried to the Lord. God showed Moses a tree and cast it into the water and this made the water

possible to drink. Once again through the power of God the people see the glory of God. The cycle of discontent repeats itself every time the people face hard times. Instead of trusting in God first, the people complain. This is because the nature of people does not change. People are inherently selfish and focus on their own wants. God has led them out of slavery. Instead of being thankful, they have a critical attitude. They focus on what they want instead of the glory of God. In chapter 16 they enter into the desert and the people complain there is no food and God rained down bread from heaven.

How soon we forget all the wonderful things God has done for us. A major characteristic of people is a selfish desire that acts as a wedge in our relationship with God. People stop being obedient to God and focus on selfish wants. The irony is that the more we have, the less we enjoy it. We see this cycle prosperity and transgression repeat in the Bible; in Exodus, Judges, the exile, and on into society today. People turn from God, face hard times, repent, turn back to God and are rescued by the one true God.

Moses is the biblical hero but it is God that leads us and provides for us. The people were exactly where God led them: to freedom, water, food, toward the Promised Land. A dominant message taken from the Scripture is God will take care of you. However, a more thoughtful approach reveals the message is that God will take care of you when you are where God leads you. When the people criticized Moses they were free, in the place where God led them, and still they were dissatisfied with God. The Lord provided for them even though they were complaining because they were where God led them. Their problem was they forget about the things that God has already done for them.

The contemporary lesson for us is to know and trust the Lord. There is a big disparity between Moses and the people. This is a multiple lesson of the Bible. Moses trusted God when the people did not. Instead of trusting God they complained. While the people were complaining Moses was seeking the Lord. We prefer to think God is on our side, everything will be OK, and God will take care of us. However, we need to make sure we are on God's side. When God says "I am the Lord" This is so that when the divine power is revealed the people will know the one true God. We are to seek the Lord, trust and obey, live lives of devotion, out of love and appreciation.