

PRAY

Title: Between The Rock and A Hard Place

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about a Journey.

The dictionary describes a Journey as a - trip, an expedition, a passage or crossing.

Just the word itself stirs up something in you. It sounds adventurous.

If I said I was taking a journey to Africa, you might envision some exciting trip thru jungles and mountains.

But whether you realize it or not each one of us is on a Journey.

Life itself is a journey.

A journey consists of a starting point and a destination.

In life your starting point is birth and inevitably your destination is death.

But the Journey is not the starting point or the destination.

The actual Journey is what takes place between the two points.

All of us take this journey. Whether you want to or not.

Sometimes within a journey there are smaller journeys or expeditions.

Distinct periods of time that also have a starting point and a destination.

The Spiritual Journey

One of the most important journeys that can take place within life's natural journey is your spiritual Journey.

The starting point of this journey begins when you accept Jesus as Savior and are born again.

Its destination is Heaven or Eternal life in the Presence of God.

But your actual journey is what takes place between the new birth and heaven.

Sometimes a journey goes smooth and sometimes not.

Sometimes we know where we are going and sometimes the road leads us where we didn't expect to go.

Sometimes we understand and sometimes we do not.

In life's journey we seldom have a map or plan to follow. We are lost trying to find the way on our own.

Hoping we are going in the right direction.

But in my Spiritual Life's journey I am not lost.

In fact Psalms 37:23 says, "The steps of a righteous man are ordered by the LORD..."

I am not righteous in myself. I am righteous by the blood of Jesus.

I am a child of God.

And because of that God orders my steps.

God lays out the road map for my journey.

All my steps are ordered by Him!

God does not lead me sometimes and then not at other times.

Why is it when we like the road we are on we say God is leading us.

But if we don't like the road, then God has abandoned us.

If the road is smooth, God is leading us.

But if the road gets rough, we cry out where is God?

I've come to learn over the years that
God orders my steps ...

- In the morning when the dew is on the ground.
- In the noon time when the sun is hot.
- In the evening when the sun goes down.
- Up the mountain where I can see clear and far ahead.
- In the valley where I can't always see so clearly.
- In the meadows where it's plentiful and refreshing.
- In the desert where it's dry and fruitless.
- When the road is smooth.
- When the road is rocky.
- When the seas are calm and peaceful.
- And He orders my steps when the storm is raging.

As long as I am covered by the blood I am righteous!

And as long as I am righteous, then the Lord orders my steps.

It doesn't mean I always understand where he is leading me.

It just means that he is always leading me and where he leads me I must follow.

BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE GOD IS ORDERING YOUR STEPS CORRECTLY??

Tonight I want to talk to you about the times when the journey takes us where we don't understand.

The best example of that I can find is in the book of Exodus.

It's probably one of the greatest journeys recorded in the Bible.

In Exodus we find the Israelite embarking on a Journey.

The starting point is the leaving of Egypt.

Egypt is symbolic of the world and its sin.

God has delivered them out of their bondage and slavery to bring them into freedom.

He has brought them thru by the blood of the Lamb.

Remember the Passover?

You cannot be free from the World's bondage and sin without first passing thru the blood.

Their destination was the Promised Land.

A land flowing with milk and honey.

But you can't step from the beginning directly into the end.

There has to be an in between. A journey to get you there.

So God begins to lead them using Moses as the leader.

A DIVINE DELIVERENCE AND DIRECTION

Exodus 13:17 ¶ *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest perhaps the people repent [or change their minds] when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea:*

If it had been up to us we would have took the shortest route to the blessing.

But the shortest way is not always the best way.

Had the Israelites gone the short route they might have died.

God knew they would not be able to handle the battles yet.

They would have backslidden and returned to Egypt.

So he leads them thru the wilderness to the Red Sea.

A DIVINE GUIDANCE

Look at verse 21 & 22

21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

It's important to remember that God was leading them!

At no time has the Lord abandoned them or left them alone!

Imagine. You just get freed from your enemy.

Your heading to the Promise God has said is yours.

You think you are going in the right direction.

After all, you are following the cloud and pillar of fire.

And then all of the sudden there is a sea in front of you?

Not a stream. Not a river. A whole sea!

The way forward is completely blocked.

Have you ever hit a wall that seemed to block you from moving forward?

Have you ever had an obstacle in the way of your blessing?

Have you ever wondered if you really were on the right road?

It would be easy at this point to think God was no longer leading them.

It would be easy to contemplate turning back.

But God knew that too so he had a plan!

God always has a plan!

He's working out far more than you think.

A DIVINE POSITIONING

*Exodus 14:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.*

God tells them to camp at a place called Pihahiroth!

This name actually means THE LAST ENCAMPMENT

In other words, here is what he is saying to us.

If you trust me...

It's the last time you will have to camp here!

It's the last time you will have to deal with this thing!

But then look what God does in verse 3 & 4.

It's almost hard to believe in the natural.

A DIVINE TRAP

3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

God leads his people to what seems like an impossible pass and then he puts it in their enemy's heart to go after them!

He tells Pharaoh to go get them back!

It seems cruel in the natural mind. What kind of God is this?

It seems like God is using his own people as bait for a trap!

But that is what he's doing!

A DIVINE CHASE

5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? 6 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:

7 And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

9 But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon.

God doesn't just send part of the army.

He makes sure the whole army goes to get them.

This is crazy. Is he trying to kill us?

That's exactly what the people thought.

10 ¶And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

We do the same thing.

How many of us at one time or another thought things were better when we lived in the world? [Egypt]

God loves us so much that he will take drastic measures to keep us.

God will do whatever is necessary in your life to bring you victory!

A DIVINE COMMAND

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. 15 ¶And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

In other words...I didn't bring you here to retreat or die.

I brought you here to move forward!

A DIVINE RE-POSITIONING

16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. 17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. 19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: 20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

God stepped in between them and the enemy.

God blocked them in so the enemy could not reach them.

But now the Israelites had no choice.

God had placed them between The ROCK and a Hard place.

The only way to survive was to go forward.

Sometimes God will bring you where you have no choice but to trust him!

If they turned back the enemy would kill them.

Sometimes God will set up your circumstance to force you to move forward!

21 ¶ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

God brought them right down the middle of the obstacle!

It doesn't mean that you go thru without fear.

Sometimes being obedient causes our knees to shake.

But look what happens when they are obedient.

23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,

25 And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

Think about it. He thru them into confusion.

This must have looked like something out of the 3 Stooges.

God made the wheels come off!

Then look what happens...

A DIVINE VICTORY

26 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

The very circumstance that they walked thru was the tool used by God to entirely destroyed the enemy.

Never again would the Egyptians come after them!

What originally seemed to the Israelites like a wrong road actually wiped out an enemy in their lives.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

Sometimes the obstacle in your life is a set up by God to destroy your enemy!

Sometimes God wants to force you to move forward and not turn back!

What is your Red sea tonight?