

“Have Big Faith”

As this summer vacation season came to an end, I couldn't help but once again feel that life is a lot like traveling. This summer's travels brought a succession of joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, and numerous accidents and incidents, both great and small. However, overcoming those circumstances and conditions with perseverance and endurance to continue our journey as planned is part of the joy of traveling.

When we read the scripture of Exodus, we may feel as though our lives are like the escape from Egypt that the Israelites experienced. Despite the series of dangerous and life-threatening events, they had to continue forward, faithfully holding onto the promise of God. And at last, the victory of God was given as promised to those who endured and followed with faith.

Let's examine today's scriptures to determine what it means to have the true faith that God wants us to have.

I. God places you at the edge of the sea to test your faith (Ex. 14:16). There is a Korean saying that says, "Your foot can be chopped by a trusted axe," which is typically used when one is betrayed or disappointed by something they trusted. Even our trustworthy God places us in situations where we feel disappointment or despair, doesn't he? And we may feel a sense of internal conflict against our faith at such times. While we are sure that God knows that He is the only being we can trust, He remains silent and hides His face during those times of crisis.

On July 24th, 2021, the first day of our summer vacation, Euni and I had just finished loading all our stuff into our van for our trip. Our first stop was San Francisco, and we were excited to see our grandsons. But first, we had an 8:30 a.m. appointment at an auto repair shop to fix the timing chain on our 13-year-old van.

I turned the ignition, but the engine wouldn't start; the van's battery had unexpectedly died! But I had just changed the battery two weeks ago. What happened? It turns out that it was all Euni's fault. The night before, she was checking the van's audio system and had not taken out the key.

The van was parked in the garage, so it wasn't possible to put our other car next to the van to try to jump-start it. Nor was the jumper cable long enough to reach the other car, which was parked outside the garage. It seemed that our only option was to call AAA, but the operator said someone would call me back. 25 minutes passed without a call. Perhaps we lived out of their service zone. If we could not fix the van early enough, the first day of our much-anticipated vacation would be ruined. There was nothing I could do.

We pray to God every day and ask for His wisdom in our daily lives. Yet, we are still faced with many unexpected and difficult situations, like my situation with the van. What is your first reaction or response in the face of difficulties? The book of Exodus shows us how the Israelites responded to their difficult situation.

In chapter 14, verses 10–12, it says, "When the Israelites saw the king and his army marching against them, they were terrified and cried out and blamed Moses and the Lord. Didn't we tell you before we left Egypt that this would happen? We told you to leave us alone and let us go on being slaves of the Egyptians. It would be better to be slaves there than to die here in the desert."

It's easy for us to understand why they blamed Moses and God when we look at their current situation. The Red Sea was completely blocking their path to the promised land of Canaan. Canaan was the land in which God instructed Moses to lead His people. I'm sure the Israelites felt able to walk on the sands of the deserts for however long it might take but felt completely insecure about swimming across the Red Sea, even for a short distance. However, at that moment, in a test of faith, God placed them at the edge of the sea.

In this situation, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for human beings to understand or even accept God. Humans tend to only see what is currently at hand and only look at humanly possible solutions, or what we believe to be common sense. And more often than not, non-believers describe God as having no common sense, forgetting that God's ways transcend common sense.

Let's listen here to what God said in this situation in verse 16. God said, "Lift up your walking stick and hold it out over the sea. The water will divide,

and the Israelites will be able to walk through the sea on dry ground." The Israelites expected to travel along desert roads; however, God prepared them for a road deep in the Red Sea.

God testifies in Isaiah 55:8–9, "My thoughts are not like yours, and my ways are different from yours. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thoughts above yours."

As humans, it's easy to question why God would confuse us by leading us down a difficult path when there are easier paths to take. Let's try to answer that question ourselves. God doesn't lead us to a difficult path, but rather to a path where we can overcome a difficulty. We love to say, "What God wants for us is not to become successful but to become faithful." Therefore, what God wants for us is not to possess great abilities and accomplishments but to possess great faith.

Going back to my vacation story, AAA called me back an hour and twenty minutes later. By that time, we had already left the house and had been driving for 40 minutes. How? Obviously, that was with the help of God.

We could not find any help and kept praying and calling on God silently amid our frustration. At that time, our neighbor, Mr. Mark, was passing by our front yard for his morning physical exercise. Euni saw Mr. Mark and called out to him for help. He drove his powerful, 8-cylinder truck from his house and connected a long jumper cable to our van through the garage window, which was able to start the engine. Hallelujah!

How thankful and inspirational it was for us! Through that crisis, we had confirmation that God's helping hand was going to be with us throughout our entire trip, and left home with great thanks and joy.

Whenever you confront deep waters in your life, call on, confess, and rely on God almighty, who parts the waters for you so that you can walk through the sea on dry land.

II. God threw Pharaoh and his army into the sea (14:25–28).
With the slavery of Israel, the reign of Pharaoh in Egypt was the most powerful in the world at the time in terms of its political and military powers. However, looking at Egyptian history, its power after the Exodus significantly declined. They never experienced such glory days again.

Once there was a bar and a church located on the same street in a town. A few years later, the bar closed, and the owner of the bar sued the neighboring church. The bar owner insisted that his business went down because of the prayers of the church and the congregation.

A lay representative from the church appeared before the court as the defendant. He refuted the accusation of the former bar owner, and he said, "Your honor, do you really believe the bar would go out of business due to the prayers of the church and its congregation?" Church! Between the bar owner and the church member, who do you think has genuine faith?

Going back to the scripture, in verse 25, the Egyptian army shouted out, "Let's get out of here! The Lord is fighting for the Israelites against us." They realized that the God of Israel had attacked them when the wheels of the chariots became stuck for no reason, making it difficult to move forward. So then, why were they killed in the Red Sea even though they acknowledged the power of God?

Although those Egyptians acknowledged God's power momentarily, they could not become God's chosen people as the Israelites were. God distinguishes between two types of faiths: the one that accepts God as the Father and the other that thinks of God as an uncle. God hates false faith. In the book of James 2:19, it says, "Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe—and tremble with fear."

Church, genuinely confess your faith in God as our Father. Only you and the Holy Spirit know the authenticity of your faith. If Jesus Christ is truly your savior, you are already living a victorious life that overcomes the power of death through His sacrifice.

III. God gives us the power to forgive others in faith (Mt 18:21–35). The sandy road in the desert may have been the easy and logical route, but it was also the route leading to ruins because the Egyptian army would have chased the Israelites down. Those who walked through the sea on dry land never saw Egyptians again, as promised by Moses in verse 13. They experienced this miracle as a result of relying on the promise of God. Our everlasting life is given to us through Jesus and is only possible through our faith.

What does Jesus mean when he says, "Forgive him seventy times seven"? He reminds us that our salvation is a blessing bestowed on us completely by God's grace. Consequently, through our faith, we are given the responsibility and privilege of forgiveness in order to forgive our brothers and sisters. When we struggle with the issue of forgiving our neighbors, it's not our duty to judge and argue whether they are right or wrong. We merely need to remember that our sins were totally forgiven by the grace of Jesus Christ."

Forgiveness is also a choice of faith, as it is a result of our reliance on God, who took it upon Himself to forgive us. We often hear people say, "I cannot forgive him or her but will forgive everyone else." Remember, Jesus has the right to say those very words about you. However, He bore His cross in silence for you.

Acknowledge and praise the joy and privilege of forgiveness that we receive through faith. As such, our power to forgive is relative to how strong our confession of faith is. Remember, God is glorified when we forgive each other.

3,500 years have passed since the Israeli exodus from Egypt. However, today's generation is confronted with more fearful realities, such as natural disasters, the reformation of politics, wars, the instability of economics, employment insecurities, health problems, etc.

How are you going to cross the Red Sea in your life? You can either prepare with very intense swimming practice or exercise your faith! Amen.

** Reflection and Application for Today's Sermon:

- 1) Have you ever faced obstacles akin to the Red Sea during your faith journey? How did you respond to God during those times? What spiritual lessons did you ultimately learn, and how do those lessons continue to impact you today?
- 2) God distinguishes between genuine faith and superficial faith. What spiritual principles or guidelines do you adhere to in order to maintain the authenticity of your faith?
- 3) Recall a time when your soul felt drained because you couldn't forgive someone, and another time when you forgave someone and experienced a sense of liberation. What do you believe caused these two different experiences?