



Sermon, Sunday April 24, 2022 “Israelites in Front of the Red Sea”

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 14:1-16 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses: ² Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea. ³ Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, “They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them.” ⁴ I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD. And they did so. ⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, “What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?” ⁶ So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; ⁷ he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. ⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly. ⁹ The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. ¹⁰ As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” ¹³ But Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.” 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.

Introduction: The difference between hope and personal wishes

Have you ever read a book called, "Finding my way home"? The book was written by Henri J. M. Nouwen, who died in 1996. It consists of four essays in which he says that most of our waiting is filled with wishes like, “If I had a good job.... If my pain passed...”, etc.

As Nouwen mentions in this book, we have many wishes. And most of our waiting consists of waiting for an end. Also, we want our future to go in the direction we want, even while we wait. If it doesn’t, then we suffer.

But for many believers in the Bible, waiting is more about hope than personal wishes. Hope is waiting for something to happen in accordance with the promises of the Lord. In that sense, the hope of the Bible is fundamentally different from our personal wishes. We must think about whether we are people who live with a hope that is God's will be done in our life, or do we only hope for our personal wishes to come true?

If we can live by remembering the word of the Lord and what He has done in our lives, we will live a life of hope and waiting, otherwise we will remain in a place where we only wish for our life's wishes. What we must remember here is that Jesus hoped that God the Father's will, not his own, would be done in this world.



Body: The people of Israel in front of the Red Sea

Today's text describes how the Israelites, who had ended their slavery in Egypt, began their exodus from Egypt according to the Lord's command. However, a problem arises during the Exodus. The Red Sea was blocking the way for the Israelites to go to Canaan. And from behind, Egyptian cavalry are pursuing the Israelites. Also, the left and right sides of the Israelites were blocked by mountains. The people of Israel are in a crisis of absolute despair. Israel encountered this crisis not because of Moses' lack of leadership, but rather because the people of Israel followed God's commands. God commands the Israelites to change the way to Canaan and march to the southeast rather than the northeast where the land of Canaan is located.

In the end, it was God who created the situation the Israelites now faced with the Red Sea blocked by the north, south, east, and west. Then why did God do this?

The reason was not only to show the people of Israel and the world who God was, but also to make the people of Israel remember that God, the Lord also wanted the Israelites to learn about waiting and patience in the process.

We experience the difference between a life of faith and a life of not remembering the Lord's works and promises to us in our hearts. Today's text also clearly shows the difference between those who remember what the Lord has done and those who do not. Moses remembered the Lord's promises and works during crisis, and the people of Israel were not sure of the Lord's promises and works.

1. The people of Israel and Moses

According to today's text, when the chariot squadron led by Pharaoh King of Egypt arrived near the Israelites, the Israelites began to be shaken and afraid.

Exodus 14:10 describes these people of Israel. **"When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were in great fear. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD"**

The people of Israel forgot all the wonderful miracles God had performed for Pharaoh in Egypt. God helped the Israelites get out of Egypt by sending ten plagues on Pharaoh of Egypt, but the people of Israel forgot the God who had done these things for them. If the people of Israel had confidence in the God who delivered them from Egypt, they should trust and fear the Lord who will do wonderful things instead of looking at and being afraid of the Egyptian army.

In contrast, Moses did not forget the wonderful things God had done to Pharaoh of Egypt and the promises he had made to himself. Moses, who remembered God, exclaimed in faith, Exodus 14:13-14 says: **And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be still."**

The original meaning of the words 'stand firm' in this verse is 'think deeply', 'be silent', 'reflect'. In other words, the meaning of the words Moses gave the people of Israel is to 'remember', 'ponder', and 'reflect' on the mighty God who brought the ten plagues on Egypt.

When we remember God's power like Moses in our Christian life, we will not forget our trust in God even in situations of crisis and fear, and we will be able to overcome all difficulties through faith. May we all not forget the Lord's promises to us through the Bible, and the wonderful memories of the Lord's grace that He has bestowed upon us in our lives. Then, what else did God want the Israelites to realize at the front of the Red Sea?



2. Waiting and Patience

The Lord wants us to learn waiting and patient. We must learn to wait quietly in the face of a crisis. **Let's look at Exodus 14:13 again. "Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again."**

Moses tells the Israelites not to be afraid of Pharaoh's army. Instead, he tells them to fear only God, wait quietly before God, and watch what God does for the Israelites. In other words, Moses commands the people of Israel to stand firm in faith and see what God is doing. Here, Moses' command to the Israelites to wait is not a passive attitude.

It commands them to have the most powerful attitude towards something new.

Then God commanded Moses: "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward." (Exodus 14:15).

God tells the people of Israel to go to the land of Canaan without longing for their past life in Egypt. And He tells Moses what he should do. **Exodus 14:16 says: "Lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go on dry ground through the sea."**

God tells Moses what he should do while waiting. He is told to hold on to God's promise again. It is Moses reaching out his hand facing forward. And what the people of Israel should do is not look back but move forward while looking at the promises God has given them.

Waiting and patience in our lives does not mean simply being passive. It is holding on to the promises of the Lord and going forward without looking back.

The prophet Jeremiah confesses in **Lamentations 3:26. "It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD"** Also, **Deuteronomy 3:22 says; "Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you". Furthermore, Romans 8:31 says; "If God is for us, who can be against us?"**.

The Lord is with us as we wait and persevere in faith. The Lord loves us so much that by His grace He saves us from all difficulties and suffering.

Conclusion: Remember God and Wait within Hope

Now let's summarize today's sermon. When King David fled alone in the wilderness of Judea, he remembered God. So, David confesses in **Psalm 63:6-7. "On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings."**

Even if we are lonely and fearful, God gives us courage when we remember Him and meditate on His Word. May we all remember the God who has guided and cared for us in our lives. Also, we must wait within hope, persevere under suffering and move forward before difficult situations.

