

Stand Still and Watch

The Israelites had seen amazing things in Egypt. God had brought great and terrible afflictions on their slave masters: the Nile turned to blood, locusts which devoured the country's livelihood, and darkness so thick it could be felt. These were just three of the ten plagues, which culminated in the death of every firstborn male in the nation. It was these acts of God which finally forced the Egyptians to let Israel go.

Joy changed swiftly to fear. Pharaoh's army chased them to the shores of the Red Sea and there was no way out. The three million or so people of Israel appeared to have a stark choice: slaughter and slavery or drowning in the sea. Quickly the fear turned to rebellion against God and His chosen leader, Moses.

In their terror, the people said:

It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness (Exodus 14:12).

However, God had big plans for them. He had brought them out of slavery and He was going to lead them to the Promised Land. He was certainly not going to let them be destroyed here.

Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (v13-14).

Indeed, God did save them. He parted the Red Sea, Israel passed through it safely, then the Egyptian army was destroyed in the returning waters as they tried to follow. In fact, for forty years, God did amazing things as He brought His people to the land He had promised. At the end of that time, Moses said:

Your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did (Deuteronomy 11:7).

Our Limited Powers

Despite being some 3,500 years ago, this episode teaches us a valuable lesson for today's busy world. All too often we are preoccupied with activity: doing, going, working, getting. Many people today equate being busy with value, and 'keeping busy' is a standard response to say that 'all is well'.

But in the big things of life, this has little value. When someone becomes ill, they cannot cure themselves. If we lose a loved one, no amount of effort can bring them back. Busyness will not make our children happy or well behaved, and rarely prevents us losing an important relationship or a job. In fact, the opposite is often the case.

There are times when we need to stand still and watch; to rely on God's power. Yet this requires some humility on our part, to recognise that we need His help; to recognise that we cannot do everything for ourselves.

This is a lesson the man Job had to learn, when he suffered devastating losses of goods, family and his health. One of his friends said:



God thunders marvellously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend... Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God (Job 37:5, 14).

Shortly afterwards, God would remind Job of his utter powerlessness in comparison to the Creator. Job responded with humility to worship God, who in turn blessed him greatly.

The Strongest Protector

In the story of Job, we again see the good news. God is not only powerful, He is willing to care for His people – those who worship and try to please Him. There is no greater help we could seek. He will protect our eternal well-being because He promises to set up His kingdom here on earth, when Christ will reign as king. He will raise from the dead faithful people from throughout time, and they will live for ever. This is why the Psalmist wrote:

I will lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow

your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore (Psalm 121).

The Lord God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to make all this possible. We cannot save our own lives or earn a place in His kingdom – it is a gift He wants to give. And He will give it to us if we get to know Him through His message (the Bible) and do what He asks. This means being baptised and then living a God-centred life.

This too is good news for us, as it entails relying on God and not on our own strength. It means ‘standing still’ at times, and watching Him at work in the world and in our own lives. The Apostle Paul put it like this:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:31–32).

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