

9/17/23

Newton

May the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, our rock, our redeemer. Amen.

I'd like to make clear what this passage is about and what this passage is NOT about.

This passage is about the Israelites passing through the Red Sea. But, It is **not** about killing innocent lives of Egyptian soldiers.

This passage is about God who is our savior and God's love. It is NOT about this angry and violent God who drowned Egyptian soldiers.

This passage is about God using us humans as God's co-workers. But, It is NOT about God doing everything and we are like robots, passively doing what God tells us to do.

This passage should **not** be read literally, but read as a story that tells us about **who** this God is and **what** we are supposed to do in times of insurmountable challenges.

The Israelites left Egypt. But, Pharaoh realized that he didn't really want to let them go. So, Pharaoh took all the chariots and advanced to get the Israelites. They were getting close. And, the Israelites complained.

Of course they complained.

There is the Red Sea in front of them.

There are Pharaoh and his chariots **chasing** after them, and every minute, every second, they are getting close to them.

How can they **NOT** complain? How can they **NOT** have fear?

When we think there is **no** choice for us, **but** to have fear,
When we think there is the sea in front us, there are people against us,
When we think that we are in between a rock and a hard place,
This passage is saying that, you have God with you.

When all the people say that there is **no** way for you,
this passage says that Yes, there is a way.
There is a way that God prepared for you, for us.

God prepares a way for us. God does everything.
God sent the angel so that it leads the way.
God put the pillar of cloud in front of the Israelites and behind them.
God protected them.
God sent the strong wind and let it blow all night, and
the sea was divided, it became like walls and
the sea stayed divided the whole night while the Israelites passed through.

God did everything. But, God **also invited** human beings to be part of
God's saving work.

Why do you think, God told Moses to stretch out his hand?
When he did that, the water was separated.

Think about this. Did God **need** Moses to stretch out his hand in order that
God separate the water? Did God need Moses to do this?
Without Moses' stretched hands, could God **NOT** separate the water?
Of course, God could.

Then, why did God need Moses to do it? Why?
Because, God wants **us humans** to be part of God's saving work.

Even though God did everything, literally everything,
God still wants humans to be part of it.

I said once that God's work is 100% God's work and 100% our work. That's true.

It is 100% God's work. God does everything. At the same time, it is 100% human work because God allows it, because God makes it possible for us to participate.

Look at the Israelites.

Why did God bother to separate **the sea**?

Why did God bother to wait for all the Israelites to pass through the sea?

Well, we know that God is patient. Time does not bother God. **One day** is like 1,000 years and 1,000 years are like one day. God is beyond time and space. God is patient. God does not have a limit.

But, why did God separate the sea and have the Israelites **to** pass through the sea? Why did God wait patiently?

Let me tell you. There are easier ways. There are much easier and simpler ways.

God could have created a strong tornado. God could have **made it** LIFT up all the Israelites into the air, carry them over to the other side of the sea and **land** them safely on the dry ground.

Why bother **separating** the sea?

Why bother with these slow and **complaining** human beings?

God could have made it quick, simple, and easy. But God didn't do that.

Why?

Because, God wants us to be part of God's saving work.

God wants us to know that God's work is 100% God's work, and 100% human work, Even though God does everything.

God encourages us to be a part of God's saving work.
God does not want us to be robots.
God wants us to be **willing** to participate in God's work.

That's why God prepares everything. Everything. And, God invites us gently to God's saving work.

It was God who appeared to the Israelites when they were still slaves.
It was **NOT the Israelites who cried to God first**. They did not have much of a concept of this one called "**I am who I am**." They didn't.

It was God who appeared to Moses **and** showed him the bush that was burning, but NOT burnt. It was **NOT Moses who cried out to God first**.

It was God who did everything to help Moses.
When Moses complained that he cannot go to Pharaoh and speak, It was God who even prepared Aaron to go with him.

God showed all the miracles, all the plagues.
God gave specific instructions of what the Israelites have to do.
God did everything.

Sooner or later, we will have Thanksgiving. What images do you have when you think of Thanksgiving?

Of course it is Thanksgiving dinner. What is Thanksgiving without Thanksgiving dinner?

What is Thanksgiving without our stomach **full**, without so much leftover, which we could eat for the rest of the week?

Our parents or hosts do all the shopping, all the cooking, all the cleaning of the house for guests, the setting up the table, and then they provide these

amazing meals for all the families, friends, and loved ones, especially children.

Imagine some guests who did not do anything in shopping, cooking, cleaning, nothing at all, but at the end of the great Thanksgiving meal, imagine that they praise themselves saying,

“Wow, awesome. I mean, I really outdid myself. I was great, because I could eat so much food. That means, my stomach is healthy enough. I mean, my tongue was great. I could taste and **savor** all the food very well. My hand worked great as well. It was **NOT** shaking. It was steady. I was able to bring food into my mouth. And, my back was great as well. I was able to sit right on this chair for an hour. I mean, I really outdid myself.”

If you know anyone who says this, please stay away from him or her. Please.

All this person did was to bring the food to the mouth. That’s all this person did, but still this person finds a way to praise himself/herself. How ridiculous is it?

God did everything for us to save us.
God did everything for the Israelites to save them.
And out of love, God wants us to be part of God’s saving work.
And we sometimes like to say, “I did it. I was great!”

Read this Exodus passage, and you will find that there are only 2 things that God asks the Israelites to do.

First, God asks Moses to stretch out his hands. That's all. How hard can it be? Unless otherwise you have severe shoulder and neck injury, this should be a piece of cake, really. He did **not** do that for an hour. It looks like it was just **one stretch** of his arm momentarily.

Second, God asks the Israelites to pass through the sea. How difficult was it? Naturally, we think that the bottom of the sea would be wet. Even though water was separated, water **was there** just a minute ago. So, we naturally think that it was like mud. It was wet. Think about walking on mud with sandals on.

But, what does the passage say? God made it dry. No mud. Not wet sandals. God made it easy for these Israelites.

Now imagine Moses saying this. "Did you see what I did? I stretched my arms and this miracle happened. Wasn't I great? My arms looked great. Didn't they? Did you see the biceps? Wasn't I great?"
Imagine Moses attributing all the credit to himself, not to God.

Imagine that these Israelites give credit to themselves. "Did you see how I passed through the sea? I ran very quickly. I did a good job. My legs were strong. I did a wonderful job. I even ran carrying my child. How awesome was I? My legs were strong. My arms were strong. I was awesome."

We forget so easily what God does, especially, after we overcome great challenges.

Let us remember God before the challenges.

Let us hold onto God in times of these insurmountable sea walls.

Let us give thanks to God after passing through the sea.

And, let us remember God who invites us to God's saving work.

Let us be in peace. God prepares a way for us. We just need to follow the path that God prepared. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

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Exodus 14:19-31

14:19 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. 14:20 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. 14:21 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. 14:22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. 14:23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. 14:24 At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. 14:25 He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." 14:26 Then the LORD said to **Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea**, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." 14:27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. 14:28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. 14:29 But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. 14:30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 14:31 Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the

Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.