

Doomed to Repeat | January 31, 2021

Week 5 | Exodus 14-15 | Onward and Upward

The entire premise of this series is to teach you principles that'll help you avoid repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

- In week 1, we learned from Joshua 1 to trust God and obey His commands.
- In week 2, we read Deuteronomy 30, where Moses reiterates the Jews' need to trust and obey God and encouraged them to repent if they failed to do so.
- In week 3, we study Moses' speech to the children of Israel after the forty-year wandering. Moses summed up the two fundamental principles that the generation before them had lacked: humility and hindsight. He told them the best chance they had at avoiding their parent's and grandparents' mistakes was that they needed to squash any pride in their hearts. They needed to remind themselves of what God had done for them.
- Last week, we addressed the people who simply do not want to change. In Numbers 13 and 14, we read about how the children of Israel listened to their fears rather than step out by faith. They even wanted to go back to their old life in Egypt; they wanted to become slaves once again. Through that scene, we learned that when inertia and nostalgia come together, the results are catastrophic.

Today, we'll be studying one of the most famous stories in all of the bible: the Red Sea crossing. This story illustrates what happens when a people decide to change, move forward, and better themselves.

Now, there is no lack of self-help resources today. For the person wanting to change, there are books, TV shows, and seminars aplenty. In fact, some even have sayings to help them focus their energies in a better direction. For instance, beloved comic-book artist **Stan Lee** always closed his writings, interviews, and speeches by saying, "Excelsior!" Now, if you're like me, you couldn't begin to guess what that word means. Thankfully, in one of his many interviews, Stan Lee explained, "You know, my motto is 'Excelsior.' That's an old word that means 'upward and onward to greater glory.' It's on the seal of the state of New York. Keep moving forward, and if it's time to go, it's time. Nothing lasts forever."

As far as a personal mantra goes, I must admit, that pretty good. However, while Stan Lee wanted to move forward and conquer any mountainous obstacle ahead of him, Christians have a somewhat different approach. While we undoubtedly want to make progress in our life, we are not driven by personal ambition; we are driven by our spiritual adoration. Our goals aren't self-centric but God-centric. When we look "upward," we aren't looking for another conquest but looking to our King.

So yes, in a way, the Christian can say, as Stan Lee did, "Excelsior...onward and upward!" But in their heart, the believer knows that for every mile gained, there ought to be prayers expressed. For, as we'll see today in our passage when followers of God are moving onward, they are also worshipping upward.

READ: Exodus 14:10-31 (ESV)

¹⁰ When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they **feared** greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the **LORD**. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ The **LORD** will fight for you, and you have only to be **silent**."

¹⁵ The **LORD** said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go **forward**. ¹⁶ Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the **LORD**, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."

²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen."²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Did you notice the switch? The chapter begins with the children of Israel fearing Pharaoh, but it ends with the Jews fearing the Lord. Fear is a powerful motivator. While we may have many concerns, worries, and fears, our fear of the Lord is our primary focus.

Now, how do the children of Israel respond to this miraculous event? They sing. They had progressed onward, and then they focused themselves upward.

READ: Exodus 15:1-18 (ESV)

¹ Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying,

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. ² The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

³ The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.

⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. ⁵ The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. ⁶ Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. ⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.

⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.' ¹⁰ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹ Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? ¹² You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

¹³ You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. ¹⁴ The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. ¹⁶ Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. ¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands have established. ¹⁸ The LORD will reign forever and ever."

They feared...the obeyed...they advanced...and then they sang.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

Direct your steps onward and declare your song upward.

By the fear of the Lord, we can move forward.

READ: Proverbs 4:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. ²⁶ Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

You cannot make progress if you're distracted. You will repeat the mistakes of your past if you lose sight of the One who goes before you. You may be surrounded by complicated and trying circumstances, but direct your steps forward after God.

Fear keeps us in the grips of stagnation. And if we ever feel like we are boxed in, it is because we have allowed our fear of the Lord to be displaced. He commands us to go. He tells us to trust and obey him and move forward. He wants our life to be one big faith step after another. But it is up to us to take that first step of faith. Onward Christian, onward.

When we move onward, we must not forget to worship the Lord.

READ: Psalm 150 (ESV)

¹ Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! ² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵ Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Worship is the natural result of a successful journey. Anytime we fail to give God his praises, we have forgotten who it was that got us here. C.S. Lewis said, "Only in the act of praise and worship can a person learn to believe in the goodness and greatness of God." If you are not in awe of Him, you have not noticed how much He's worked in your life for your good. Upward Christian, upward.

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Video Description

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

"Message in a Minute" Video Description