

He Leadeth Me. - Exodus 13:17-21; 14:21-28

Introduction: One of the great themes in the book of Exodus is the leadership of God. In this book which chronicles one of the greatest events in the history of God's people, we see God's leadership throughout. From Moses' parents protecting him from certain death, to the Pharaoh's own daughter nurturing Moses as a child, to Moses to become the deliverer of Israel, God's hand of leadership is seen in every stage of Moses' life. And from the way Moses presented his case before Pharaoh, to the way Joshua was chosen to finish the task of leading the people of God to the Promised Land, God's mighty hand is evident through it all. In fact, the exodus experience would not have occurred at all if it were not for the hand of God leading His people.

In Exodus 2:11-15, we find a young Moses confronted with the mistreatment of his own people by the hand of the Egyptians. In one instance, he watched as a fellow Hebrew slave was being beaten by an Egyptian. Moses decided to take matters into his own hand and killed the Egyptian and tried to secretly hide his body. But what Moses didn't know was that he was being watched. The next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting, and he tried to break up the fight. One of the men asked him, "*Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?*" (2:14). The answer was that Moses had made himself ruler and judge, and he had learned that in his own power, he could not break the stronghold of slavery over the Israelites. However later, after Moses fled in fear from Egypt, and spent his days tending the flock of his father-in-law, God finally called him to lead His flock. That's when Moses found out that with the power and guidance of God in his life, he could indeed deliver his people from bondage and lead them into a new land.

This portion of Exodus (Chapter 13:17-14:31) relates the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the other side of the Red Sea. It is an account of the providential and miraculous leadership of God, as He guided over 2 million people through impossible obstacles, and into safety. If this passage tells us anything, it emphasizes the fact that it was God who accomplished this.

And the lesson for tonight is: God is still leading His people. God is still able to deliver people from the bondage of sin and addiction, and fear today. He is still leading Christians in their journey of life. How? Let's notice three ways from our text tonight. First:

1. God Leads By His Wisdom (13:17)

God had been intimately acquainted with His people all during their time of bondage. Even though it appeared to them that God had forgotten them, God knew who they were, where they were and what kind of circumstances they were in. He heard their cries and He knew their suffering. And when He sent Moses to set them free, He continued to know them. He knew that a people so recently set free from years of bondage were not physically or psychologically ready to fight an enemy. He knew that when faced with that kind of threat, they could easily turn back to Egypt.

The lesson for us is clear. God knows us too. He knows us because He made us. He knows us and loves us anyway. He knows our fears, our shortcomings, our worries, and our limitations. He knows what we're capable of handling at any given time, and in any particular situation. Because of God's great wisdom, He knows what is best for us.

You see, God has a better perspective on things that we do. The Israelites could only see the shorter, easier route. They were looking for the quickest way to get from point A to point B. They couldn't see the danger of the Philistines. But God could because He had a better perspective. The other way would be longer indeed, but it would be the better way.

We need to remember that as we journey on life's road. The easier path may not be the best path. The longer way may be harder, but if it is God's way, He will give us the grace to walk it.

The second way we see God's leadership is:

2. He Leads By His Presence (13:21)

God also leads us by His divine presence. He led the Israelites by day by a pillar of a cloud and by night by a pillar of fire. This was an unmistakable sign of His continued presence among them. He was not going to lead them to a point, then desert them. He wasn't going to let them try to figure out for themselves how to move to Mt. Sinai, He went with them.

This should be a great assurance to us. To know that God is with us is both a comfort and a confidence. We can take comfort in the fact that God is protecting and providing as we go. And we can have the confidence to take each step knowing that we are doing God's will. We can venture out by faith, and be willing to take risks, to step out on the water.

We don't have to guess our way through the Christian life. We don't have to wonder if we're doing the right thing or not. By the guiding presence of God, we can be confident that as we follow His leadership, we are on the right track.

The third way we see God's leadership today is:

3. He Leads By His Power (14:21-28)

As we said earlier, our power and intellect can only take us so far. For the Israelites, they reached the end of their power when they reached the Red Sea. There, they faced a dilemma. Behind them were the Egyptians. Before them was the Red Sea. There was no other exit strategy. They had reached the end of their power. They knew they couldn't defeat the Egyptians, but they couldn't cross the sea either.

But look at what happened! In 14:21-22 it says, *"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and it turned to dry land. The waters were divided. And the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground."* Vs. 24 says, *"During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion."* Vs. 27 says, *"Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea."*

Now, was all that caused by some magical power of Moses. Was it his hand stretched out over the sea that caused the waters to dam up and then go back? No way. It was God's power that delivered the Israelites from their dilemma. His power parted the waters, and defeated the enemies.

The lesson is clear. As we journey in this life, there will be all kinds of enemies from our past that will pursue us. There will be all sorts of barriers before us to prevent us from going forward. But we must remember that it is the power of God that protects us. If we trust His wisdom, depend on His presence, and walk in the power of His strength, there is nothing that can stop us.

Conclusion: We need God's leadership in our lives. Only He knows the best way for us to go. He alone has the resources to protect, provide and prevail. I close with the words of that old hymn written by Joseph H. Gilmore in 1862. Gilmore wrote these words after preaching one day at the First Baptist Church, Philadelphia. He had not meant them for publication, but his wife saw to it that they were published and set to music.

In 1865, he visited the Second Baptist Church in Rochester, to preach as a ministerial candidate. When he picked up the hymnal to see what the congregation was singing, he found it was his own hymn.

*“He leadeth me, O bless'd thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.
Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
By waters still, over troubled sea,
Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me.
He leadeth me. He leadeth me,
By His own hand He leadeth me.
His faithful follower I would be,
for by His hand He leadeth me.”*