

READING Exodus 14:5-22 NIV

SERMON

The Power of God Unmistakeably Revealed (Exodus 14:5-31)

“...”Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Exodus 14:13-14 NIV)

Stirring words from Moses as the people were getting stressed and wanting to turn back. They had been released from the slavery they were in, in Egypt, but then they say

“...”Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”
(Exodus 14:11-12 NIV)

Why would they want to go back? It can be answered in one word – stress. Imagine yourself there. You have been in reality, pushed out of Egypt with the Egyptians giving you gifts of gold and silver after the first born of their families, their flocks, their herds, the first born of everything had been killed during the Passover.

The angel of death had come and every household that did not have the blood of a lamb smeared on the doorpost and lintel lost their first born. I was thinking about this and realised that that could have been me! But then it would also have been me if it was the youngest that had have died that night!

So they leave probably very, very happy to be free at last. But then they come to the Red Sea. There is no way across and they see the Egyptian army behind them. They are afraid. And at this point several things begin to happen to their bodies.

- Their breathing becomes shallow because to have not got the time to breath deeply
- Their stomachs begin to churn because the body does not really need the stomach at this point, so supplies of blood are lessened by constriction of the blood vessels in that area
- Their hands grow cold because again blood to the hands is not needed, so they go cold
- Their blood pressure rises as more blood is pumped round
- Their pulse rate goes up as more and more blood is required to deliver food and oxygen to give them energy
- Their brain is put on high alert for action
- However their bodies are capable now of great feats of strength
- They are ready for a fight or to run, the ‘flight of fight’ syndrome

This is all due to a drug found within the body called adrenaline which at times like this goes rocketing up. It has been a subject that has interested me for some time because long term, adrenaline causes things like strokes, heart attacks or stomach complaints such as ulcers and burn out – something sadly seen too often in ministers. This is the long term effect of adrenaline.

However if we have no adrenaline going round our bodies it means one thing – you are dead. We need some to be alive; we need some to face the difficulties and the challenges that come our way. The danger is when we become junkies to adrenaline, to love that adrenaline rush. But we also need times of rest and relaxation, to allow the adrenaline level in our body to drop.

There is also another effect of high adrenaline levels in our bodies. I'll ask a few questions to demonstrate this.

- How many of us watch a quiz programme and can answer nearly every question on the programme and wonder why anyone gets a question wrong?
- Who here would say they are really good at Maths?
- Who here is really bad , they would say at Maths?

- What is 184 divided by 4?
- What is 186 divided by 3?

Easy questions for some as they remain relaxed and can answer those sorts of questions all day. For others the fear factor kicks in, the adrenaline level rises but pushes them over the top and so they panic more, the adrenaline level rises and this leads to panic.

So what else do we do when we are stressed? We revert to what we know. We go onto automatic pilot. The Israelites that day said to Moses

“...”Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

(Exodus 14:11-12 NIV)

Egypt was all they knew and they knew how to survive there, but here with the Red Sea in front and the Egyptian army behind – they had no idea what to do, so they panicked and said the first thing that came into their heads, “Let’s go back to Egypt, to slavery.” Seems crackers to us, but quite reasonable to them in their stressed state.

But I love the answer God gives, verse 15

“...”Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.”

(Exodus 14:15 NIV)

Don’t just sit there moaning – do as I said – move on. At times we can be like that. We can become defeatist and get stressed, so that we do not know what to do. But God always says, “Move on”.

For years Christians have been told that the church is dying. By the end of the 21st Century there will be no church in this country. However this article appeared in the Guardian Newspaper on 11 September 2010 – just 2 weeks ago



Benita Hewitt
guardian.co.uk, Saturday 11 September 2010

It's time to believe that the church in this country is no longer in decline. The latest statistics coming from various denominations are clearly showing stability in church attendance and even signs of growth. This news may come as a surprise to many people who believe that the church is a dying institution.

But the news is no surprise to us at Christian Research. We've been watching the church adapt and change over recent years, and have been collecting statistics for some time which suggest that the church in this country is in reasonably good health. There is now enough combined evidence to state confidently that the decline is over.

This is true in the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales and in the Church of England.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain has seen attendance rise from 148,835 a week in 2002 to 153,714 in 2008, with particular growth in the contact with young people aged 13 to 18 – up from 34,095 in 2002 to 41,392 in 2008.

So many Christians at the moment are paralysed into doing nothing because they say it is worthless, the church is in decline, why bother. But it is not.

Again, just this week I read this article put out by Evangelical Alliance

CHURCHES BOLSTERED BY SURVEY SHOWING 70 PER CENT OF BRITAIN IS CHRISTIAN

News that nearly three quarters of people in Britain say they are Christian has bolstered the cause for believers to become more open in expressing their faith.

The Evangelical Alliance says for too long people have felt awkward about sharing their faith at the office or in schools and colleges for fear of getting into trouble.

The research by the Office for National Statistics entitled Integrated Households Survey: Experimental Statistics showed that 71 per cent of the British population describe themselves as Christians, confirming the last national census figures from 2001.

So instead of being fearful of talking about our faith, we should be proud to talk about it especially in this country.

And we all know what happened that day for Moses and the Israelites. Verse 21

“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 turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.” (Exodus 14:21-22 NIV)

That day, God revealed his power in an unmistakable way. The Red Sea parted and the people walked over on dry land. Their stress really was for nothing because God had it all in hand. And the Egyptians, verse 26

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing towards it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.”

(Exodus 14:26-28 NIV)

Not only did God show his power once, but twice that day. But the Israelites had to rise to the challenge – and that challenge was to cross the Red Sea when the walls of water were either side of them. That too must have been terrifying and I can imagine that day some younger children crying and being dragged across by their parents.

Challenging come in many forms. I have already mentioned that challenge that the church is not in decline, but we need to help built it up. We are doing that but to go back a few years first.

We have a challenge today – to pay back the loan to LBPB before the time it should be. We can’t do that! The people that day did not think they could escape from the Egyptians but they did – God power is above all powers and we should never forget that.