

Defeating Impossible Odds

[Exodus 14:19-31](#)

I would like to share this story from Pastor Martin Dale:

A little boy came back from Sunday school one morning and his father asked him: “Well, what did you learn?” The little boy replied: “How the people of Israel were kept in Egypt and used as slaves by this guy called Pharaoh.” “Oh? Then what happened?” The little boy went on, “A guy named Moses tried all these special effects on them. It was really wicked. He turned the river to blood, he covered the Egyptians with frogs, and bugs and boils. He beat them down with hailstones, and locusts, and scared them with an eclipse of the sun. He started killing their cattle and then finally killing their oldest kids.” “And did it work?” his Dad asked. “Well, Pharaoh let them go after the kids were killed, but then he sent his army after them.” “And then what?” “Well...Moses called the Israeli air force,

and they targeted the Egyptian tanks and destroyed them on the ground. They also gave cover while the engineers laid down this pontoon bridge across the Red Sea. And then the people of Israel crossed over without getting their feet wet. But when the Egyptian army got on the pontoon bridge, the air force came back and bombed it away, and the Egyptians drowned.” “Is that what your teacher told you?” his father asked. “Well, not exactly. But if I told it the way she did, you wouldn’t believe me!”

Beating impossible odds. By all accounts this story defies all logic. It just doesn’t seem possible without our current high-tech options. Yet we serve a God who can find a way when there is no way.

We have all heard that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Many times we have said that to our

children to get them to stay on target and finish a task, or get somewhere without delay. It appears God had the same philosophy, except when you look back a little you see that God specifically led the Israelites on the long path to the shore of the Red Sea instead of the short one.

Genesis 13:17 tells us that when Pharaoh finally agreed to free the Israelites, God did not lead them away taking the shortest path. That would have led them into the land of the Philistines. In order to cross the land, the Israelites would have landed directly in the middle of a war. God did not want His people to turn and run back to Egypt in a panic. There is no doubt God could have secured a tremendous victory over the Philistines, but God chose to reveal His mighty power in another, unique way. So the Israelites took the long way around and end up hedged between the desert and the Red Sea.

It is interesting how the Bible describes the presence of God. God appeared as a pillar of clouds to Guide the way by day, and appeared as a pillar of fire at night, always ahead of the Israelites. After some intentional wandering, God had the Israelites right where He wanted them. In the meantime, Pharaoh had a change of heart about losing all his slave labor and sent his men and chariots to chase down the Israelites. This was also part of God's plan. It feels very much like a carefully strategized chess game, where God got all the pieces lined up and proceeded to make a stunning victory. You can't get more stunning than the parting of the Red Sea.

Picture the scene. The Israelites are literally trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea. The Egyptians are poised ready to charge in and reclaim their slaves, but God had another plan. It was nighttime. The cloud of God's presence

that had been in front of the Israelites suddenly went behind them as a shield between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The cloud shed light on the Israelite's side and darkness on the Egyptian's side. In the meantime, God was paving the way through the Red Sea. I had heard it said that based on the timeframe given, the fact that there were 600,000 men along with women, children and cattle to cross the sea, and the speed in which the Israelites crossed over, God would have had to carve a path no less than a mile wide. All night God pushed back the sea on both sides so the Israelites could walk through on dry ground. I am sure the sea was quite deep so picture walking through the path with walls of water on both sides as high as the eye could see, yet treading on dry ground.

The Egyptians continued to pursue the Israelites into the path between the water walls. Now I ask you, would you even

try this, knowing that the God of Israel was not on your side?

The Egyptians only had second thoughts when God threw their army into confusion – suddenly wheels were popping off their chariots! That finally got their attention but by then it was too late. God told Moses to stretch out his hand again over the sea and I picture it like the Tsunami where a wall of water came crashing down with no hope of escape. God declared checkmate.

Have we ever found ourselves in a desperate situation?

Have we ever felt trapped? Have we ever felt there was no way out? At times our faith can truly be tested. What would have happened if the Israelites would have been paralyzed by their fear and not taken the first step to cross the Red Sea? God will strengthen us as we take our first step of faith. One step at a time, God will walk with us and help to shoulder our burden,

while revealing a way out. There is a story of an old mule that fell in an old, abandoned well. While the farmer tried everything he could think of to get the mule out, he was not successful. Finally the farmer told his sons to just bury the mule in the old well. Throughout the afternoon the farmer's sons brought dirt and shoveled it into the well. With each shovel full of dirt, the mule kicked and packed down the dirt. Finally about mid afternoon, the mule simply walked out of the well, having packed down the dirt each time and climbed higher and higher until the mule could get out of its impossible situation.

What do we see as impossible situations for us today? Are we faced with financial difficulties, family issues, health problems? Or perhaps we are discouraged, and we find our faith faltering, our hope diminished. This past week marked the anniversary of 9/11. Many are still grieving for the tremendous

loss of life on that day. Prior to that others may remember December 7, 1941, when our country was also brutally attacked. My family and I visited the resting site of the USS Arizona and the monument that is built over it in Pearl Harbor. The monument itself purposefully sags in the middle with the two ends higher than the middle. It was explained to us that this was done to show that the United States was crippled on that day (the sagging middle) but once again came together as a major player in the victory declared at the end of World War II, hence the ends are higher than the middle of that monument.

We serve a God who can find a way when there is no way. Many times as individuals or as a country we may feel there is no way out. There is no end to our suffering. There is no hope. We serve an awesome God who can do the impossible by human standards. I have spent my career in healthcare where I

have seen patients time and time again that have defied science and recovered from their illnesses without any valid explanation from their physicians. Some people will tell you, “I shouldn’t be here.” Many of you may have marveled at incidents that you could not explain.

After 9/11, countless stories were received of people who suddenly had second thoughts about boarding a plane, or were led down stairwells to safety when by all accounts the World Trade Center buildings should have immediately collapsed. Others found an inner strength they didn’t even know they possessed to become heroes, rescuing those in peril. People turn to God looking for answers and comfort in times of great sorrow. Life is not easy, but we have a partner that walks with us, feels our pain, shoulders our burden, and keeps us going

through the good and bad times. Take comfort in knowing you are not alone – God is with us every step of the way. Amen.