

March 8th 2009

Sermon Title: How God Guides

Sermon Series: Building a Blessing (Capital Stewardship Campaign)

Sermon Text: Exodus 13:17-14:31

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Sermon-Based Discussion

INTRODUCTION

At BCEC, we're in the midst of a campaign to seek God's will for our church. Questions abound: Should we attempt to build a new facility? Can we raise the money required in this economy? How can we be sure this is God's will?

Though this is an exciting juncture in our church's history, the questions we face now are the same ones we face every day: Is this God's will? Should I marry this person? Should we move to this place? What career should I follow?

In this session, we'll briefly examine the big topic of how God guides. In this story of we'll see God leading the children of Israel, and how that applies to how God leads His churches and individual followers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you had it your way, how far ahead into the future would you like God to show you? Why would you want that length of time?

Read Exodus 13:17-22

2. How did God lead Israel to the Promised Land, and why did He lead them that way?
3. Do you think Israel understood this? How would you feel?
4. How did Joseph's bones and the pillar of cloud encourage the children of Israel as they followed God's leading? (Consider Genesis 50:24-25 for Joseph's bones. Consider the rest of this story and Psalm 105:39 for the pillar.)
5. Throughout the passage, what does God intend the Egyptians to learn from this experience and why?

GOING DEEPER

This lesson doesn't give us a simple formula for finding out God's will. Rather, it gives us perspective on what we should seek when asking God for His will. Are we seeking God's plan, or are we seeking God? Or put it another way, do we want to know God's will for His sake to obey Him, or for our sake just to satisfy our curiosity?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Pray to God by asking Him to reveal your motives for wanting to know His will. If it's just to satisfy our curiosity, or so we can approve or disapprove of His will, then should we not repent of that? Then ask God to seek His plan for His glory, and trust He will reveal His will in His time. And God will reveal His will to gain our good and to gain His glory.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today... The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still..." (Ex. 14:13-14)

Exodus 13:17-14:31

Crossing the Sea

¹⁷ When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." ¹⁸ So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. ¹⁹ The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.

¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place." ²⁰

²⁰ After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. ²¹ By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. ²² Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Exodus 14

¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, ² "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. ³ Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' ⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." So the Israelites did this.

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" ⁶ So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. ⁷ He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. ⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. ⁹ The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen ¹⁰ and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They 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? ¹² 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!"

¹³ Moses answered the people, "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. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶ Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸ The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

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, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

²³ The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ He made the wheels of their chariots come off ²⁶ so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

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." ²⁷ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward ²⁸ it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. ²⁸ 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.

²⁹ But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰ That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹ And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

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