

When Your Back is Against the Wall (Exodus 14)

By Doug Hamilton

There is a saying that most have heard, “Your back is against the wall.” It refers to being put into a bad situation where there appears to be no place to turn to or any means to escape. When *your back is against the wall*, it can be ridiculously difficult to gain understanding and assessment as to what to do next. That is the aim of this lesson, to learn to think under pressure when our backs are against the wall. We will be using Exodus 14 for our text and make comparison to the children of Israel.

The Basic Understandings in Dealing with Your Back Against the Wall

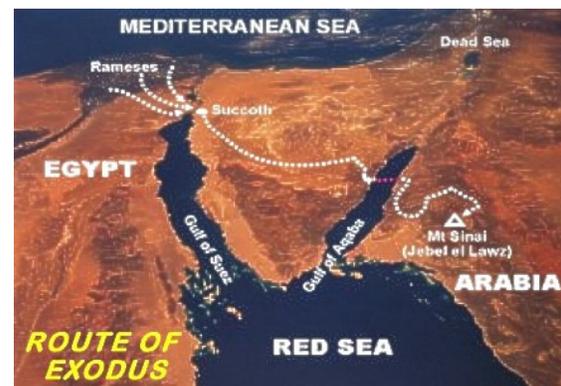
Rule #1 Understand that God Brings Your Back to the Wall.

Exodus 14:1-4 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea. ³ “For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, ‘They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ ⁴ “Thus I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

- It was predicted that the Israelites would have their backs up against the wall as it pertained to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. To God it was no surprise.
- Too many times we act as if God was completely unaware of the walls we are backed into. God allows circumstances to come into our lives to shape us with trials.
 - Job had his back against the wall of loss of wealth and health.
 - Joseph had his back put against the wall of imprisonment and injustice.
 - Gideon had his back put against the wall of war.
 - Ruth had her back against the wall of widowhood and poverty.
 - David had his back against the wall of a giant named Goliath.
- All of them and more had their backs put against a wall of circumstance by the permission of God. This should not be confused with natural consequences of sin that we can bring on ourselves, but as James says in *James 1:2-3 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* God allows walls in our lives for a purpose of drawing us closer to Him.

Rule #2 Understand that it will bring about a moment of hopelessness.

Exodus 14:5-9 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” ⁶ So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; ⁷ and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. ⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. ⁹ Then the Egyptians chased after them *with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.* ¹⁰ As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and

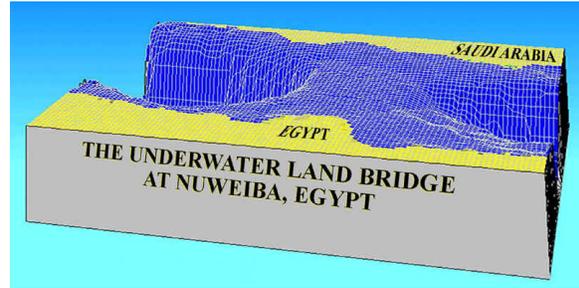


When Your Back is Against the Wall (Exodus 14)

By Doug Hamilton

behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD.

- When the children of Israel made the exodus out of Egypt following the Passover, their goal was to travel three days journey on their way to the Promised Land, but it appeared they were lost. When it was reported to Pharaoh that they made a wrong turn southeast toward the sea it appeared they were “wandering aimlessly” in the wilderness. They actually ended up with their backs to one of the gulfs of the Red Sea called the Gulf of Aqaba. Research shows that there is a natural gentle-slope underwater bridge that rises up from three to five thousand feet on either side to only a few hundred feet (see picture right). We will discuss more later concerning this being the crossing point.
- They looked more vulnerable than ever to Pharaoh and he sought to attack. The chariots brigade would have been equivalent to the armored tank division of a modern army, for they could mow down large amounts of people without resistance. As the Israelites saw this intimidating sight drawing near them, they reached a moment of hopelessness for they were going to be destroyed.
- Look at the walls that your backs have been put up against.
 - There are many that fought the wall of cancer and faced hopelessness.
 - There are some that have faced the wall of losing that special person in your life and passed through that realm of despair.
 - Many have backed up against the wall of open-heart surgery, ruptured discs, hip and knee replacement, pneumonia, severe migraine headaches and a thousand of other medical conditions, and SURVIVED!
 - There are some that have their backs against the wall of unemployment, disability and poor finances, unable to see their way out.
- All walls carry with it the sense of hopelessness for it would not be a wall without it. It is in the hopelessness that we will begin to turn our hearts to helpfulness of a God that loves and cares for us.



Rule #3 Understand that there will be temptation to doubt God.

Exodus 14:11-12 Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² “Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘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.”

- It says in Psalm 106:6-7 We have sinned like our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly. ⁷ Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. There is a difference in being afraid and being in disrespect to God; the Israelites crossed the line on that day.
- We must be extremely careful not to cross this line as well. There is a tendency to start blaming God when things do not go right for us. We tend to forget all those other times

When Your Back is Against the Wall (Exodus 14)

By Doug Hamilton

that God blessed us during the season of plenty. We should be able to look at the wall and declare praise to God, not contempt.

- Job 13:15 “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.
- Psalm 118:6 The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?
- Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

Rule #4 Understand that you must have a strategy to deal with the wall.

Exodus 14:13-15 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. ¹⁴ “The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward.”

1) Do Not Fear!

- It is natural to fear when it appears that our peril or other danger is at hand. We must consciously make the decision to not be afraid, for we know that God is on our side. We must be able to say “No matter what terror is before me, I WILL NOT FEAR!”

2) Stand By

- Often we want to immediately move into a reactive panic mode instead of a calm observation mode.
- When our back is against the wall, we must pause and think things through.
 - We should have a “*stand by*” mode of researching our options in the Bible.
 - We should have a “*stand by*” mode of turning to the Lord in prayer.
 - We should be able to have a “*stand by*” mode of being able to go to another brother or sister and seek advice for the wall that we are backed up to.
- *Stand By* does not mean to be inactive, but proactive through an open mind and an open heart. If we do not have this, then we will be in trouble for the next step.

3) See the Salvation

- Behind every wall there is salvation from the Lord, but we must look for it.
 - When the wall is depression, then salvation becomes the peace which surpasses all comprehension.
 - When the wall is a struggle with sin, then salvation is purity in the sight of God.
 - When the wall is loneliness, then salvation is fellowship.
 - When the wall is poverty, then salvation is in daily bread.
 - When the wall is illness, then salvation is healing.
 - When the wall is death, then salvation is eternal life through Jesus Christ.
- You name the wall and God will name the salvation. One way or another God is going to have the final word on the subject and He says LOOK FOR

When Your Back is Against the Wall (Exodus 14)

By Doug Hamilton

SALVATION! If the lack of vision to see salvation occurs in any of our lives, then we have failed God and ourselves. SEE THE SALVATION!

4) Go Forward

- *Exodus 14:16* “As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. The Israelites would have to take the step of faith and go forward between the parted sea. Hebrews 11:29 states it was “*By faith they passed through the Red Sea...*” They faithfully participated in their own salvation by passing through the water. Paul the apostle actually refers to this as their national baptism in 1 Cor 10:1-2.
- We sometimes expect God to do everything and us nothing. This is not the pattern in the Bible, for God expects us to be involved in the process of deliverance.
- We were backed up against the wall of our sin and death. With Egyptians of circumstance pressing down on us, we heard the gospel of hope of Jesus Christ. We made the decision that we would not fear ANYMORE! We made a STAND BY of perspective and saw what we must do to get what we wanted and it was based on the salvation message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. WE SAW SALVATION! With that God parted the waters of salvation and all He asked was to GO FORWARD through the sea by being baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins. There can be no deliverance from our wall if we refuse to GO FORWARD!

We know how it turned out.

- Exodus 14:21-23 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea *back* by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.²² The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.²³ Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea.
- Exodus 14:26-29 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen.”²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.²⁹ But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.
- There is a tendency in the doubters of God to pretend this account is beyond belief for it defies physics and reality. Just like there were doubters in the power of God back then, there are doubters today of what happened back then. The Bible is clear, this event occurred.



When Your Back is Against the Wall (Exodus 14)

By Doug Hamilton

- Deuteronomy 11:4 and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them;
- Nehemiah 9:11 "You divided the sea before them, So they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground; And their pursuers You hurled into the depths, Like a stone into raging waters.
- Many researchers have gone to the location where the Israelites crossed and found some interesting underwater discoveries. There on the natural underwater bridge-crossing divers have photographed some interesting coral formations on parts of ancient chariots dating to the time of Moses in the 18th Dynasty of Egypt. In some cases there were even the remains of gold chariot wheels found. Gold does not accumulate coral.



- When facing our back against a wall, understand that God often brings you to that wall, that it will bring forth a moment of hopelessness, that there will be temptation to doubt God and that there must be a strategy to overcome.