Heb. 11:29; Ex. 14:10-31; By Faith, Some Crossed Over I. The Act of Faith II. The Reward of Faith III. The Reward of Unbelief

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do we truly believe that our God is stronger than our enemies? Are we convinced that God is able to do more than even think or imagine? The fact is, God’s people have always been tempted to undermine or question the ability of God. As if God would promise something He could not do. From Abraham and Saran who tried to help God keep His promise with the introduction of Hagar- to Moses who took matters into his own hand when he killed the Egyptian. But by faith, we have to learn to trust that God will do what He says- and we have to be humble enough to wait upon Him to do what He said He would. This is particularly challenging when we want God to work on our time- it is hard to stand still and wait for the salvation that He has promised. But as we have seen, true faith learns to follow when the LORD calls us- to go where He sends- but by faith we are also called to wait and look up as we look for His coming salvation. So today we move on in history from Moses to now consider the people of God who were led by Moses out of bondage. Like Abraham, the people of God did not know the way they were going. They were called to take possession of land that they had not seen. God was leading them by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud of glory by day. And then- God leads them to the edge of the Red Sea. Did God lead them the wrong way? Was God getting lost- or were the people of Israel misreading the signs? Surely not! So today we consider this theme: by faith some crossed the Red Sea as they looked for the salvation of the LORD. Today and next week we will see a clear contrast- because not all have faith. We need to believe that God’s people are better off- that what they will receive by faith is better than those who do not have faith! Do we truly believe that it is better to dwell in the presence of God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked? By faith we know that what God has promised us is better than anything this world can offer.

**I. The Act of Faith**

In our first point, we consider the act of this faith. As the LORD was bringing His people out of bondage, they had to listen to God’s appointed mediator, and they had to follow His appointed leader. Now the specific event in focus is the leading of Israel to the edge of the Red Sea as we read in Ex. 14. Following Moses was an act of faith- they were leaving the most powerful nation and its army behind. They were going out into the wilderness with no army for protection. Where would they find their food and water while in the desert? How would they know the way in which they should go? So the people were led out- in obedience they followed the leadership of Moses and the LORD who led them by day and night. And finally, when they come to the edge of Red Sea- they find themselves in a very dangerous place. Exodus 14 says that they were hemmed in by the wilderness- they appeared to be wandering in the land. In other words, it looked like they did not know where they were going- if they were supposed to be going to the land of Canaan they were going the wrong way. Their travels led them south instead of north. So Israel found themselves at the edge of Red Sea instead of at the edge of land of Canaan. In fact, it is this very wandering that gave Pharaoh an idea. It seemed like the people of Israe were easy prey- they had tried to get away but they had gotten lost. Like a frightened child, Israel was wandering about helplessly. Pharaoh could ride in to the rescue. Added to this, Pharaoh missed having his free slave labor. So Pharaoh rides out with his army to bring back the Hebrew people. This sets the stage for our text. Now here, on the edge of Red Sea they were boxed in. The desert wilderness to the South- a mountain range to the North, the Red Sea to the East and the army of Pharaoh to the West. Which way would the people of Israel go. They can’t go south- that was wilderness. They cant go north- that way is barred by the mountains. The way east was block by the sea. So the only possible path led back west- back into the clutches of the army of Pharaoh. Where certain slavery and death would be found. Back to the land where our children are drowned in the river and our older members are worked to the bone building cities for Pharaoh. So the sight of Pharaoh and his army- as we can imagine- filled the people of Israel with fear. We find this repeated in Ex.14- they feared greatly and cried out. But the LORD is not done yet- He tells Moses to lift up his staff and divide the sea. So the people of Israel were given a clear way to go forward. Here again, we see the act of faith. Not only did Moses raise his hands as commanded- the people went out and went through the middle of the sea because they believed. As Heb. 11 puts it- by faith the people crossed the Red Sea on dry land. They went out and traveled forth by faith- because they believed! Well, what did they believe? Well, they believed that God was leading them by the hand of Moses. They believed that the wind would indeed hold back the waves. They trusted that, just as the LORD had said to Moses, the water would be held back in walls of water. Now this was an act of faith- I can’t imagine what it would have been like to walk on the bottom of the Red Sea with a wall of water on either side of you- held up by nothing but the wind. And even though they the enemy of Egypt on their trail- and the waters of death on either side- the people of Israel marched forth in faith. Here again, the battle between the fear of man and faith in God is clear. The Israelites started off speaking in fear. Why did you lead us into the wilderness to die? Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you lead us here? This conflict between fear and faith is a battle. What do you fear the most in this world? What enemies fill you with terror? The Israelites were more afraid of dying in the wilderness than being slaves in Egypt- but they failed to see that if God was for them, who could be against them! If they were walking by faith, God would open the way! He leads us in paths of righteousness- He does not lead us astray! If we are walking by faith, we are right where we need to be! So do not be afraid of Pharaoh or live in fear of the devil- for I the LORD have overcome! The life of faith is one where we need to choose- will we walk by faith or be paralyzed by our fear? We have to constantly assess our fears and our faith- for true faith is not always a strong faith. Sometimes we need to be stirred up in the faith again! So when doubt and fear come- when we see Pharaoh and his army in pursuit- remember these words of Moses in Ex. 14:13- Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today. The Lord will fight for you! Especially in the presence of sorrow, sickness and death we remember these words- fear God, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord! He is fighting for you! What have I to fear- if God is for us! If He fights our battles- why should my heart be afraid? Having been reminded of this gospel truth, the Israelites are again stirred up in the faith. They walk the path before them- the road through the valley of the shadow of death is traversed. The way is made open- and the people of God are baptized into Moses. A new nation is born- no longer are these the slaves of Egypt but rather the liberated people of God. By faith, we too become the people of God! By faith, we believe God’s appointed deliverer and walk the path of righteousness for His name’s sake.

**II. The Reward of Faith**

So then, what was the reward of faith? Well, simply put, those who believed and obeyed were saved! Those who believed in Moses and trusted God’s promises walked through the Red Sea and came out- safe on the other side. Heb. 11 says that the people crossed as on dry land. The muddy bottom of the sea was turned into concrete for the sake of God’s people. No slipping and sliding- no one would get stuck in the mud. They passed through with cleanliness and safety. The water stayed at their side; the Egyptian army kept at arm’s length- because God was fighting for them. What was promised was received- namely salvation! By faith, the Israelites were saved both from Pharaoh’s army and from the water of the Red Sea. Salvation is the very thing that our faith looks forward to- as Moses promised- you will see the salvation of the LORD. Or as echoed in I Peter 1:9 put it- the end and goal of our faith is the salvation of our soul. What good is faith if that faith does not save? The fact is, Israel was hemmed in on both sides. The LORD was her rear guard- a shield and a fortress. The waves of death would not overcome God’s people. Even as Ex. 14 concludes- The Lord saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptian that day. And the end result was this- the people fear the LORD and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses. The Spirit used this event to strengthen the faith of God’s people- so that they trusted God more and more- and they believed in His appointed servant. Passing through the Red Sea or crossing the Jordan River is often used as a type or image of the Christian journey. A life of trial from which we are kept safe- even as we pass from death to life. As we go from slavery to liberty- sin to forgiveness- from the land of shadow to the land of rest! All of this was provided by the LORD and his appointed servant. Interestingly, the chosen object of vessel of deliverance was wooden staff. A wooden pole would be lifted up in the wilderness- and all who look to this one lifted up will be saved! A new and living way through the water is opened by the LORD- a way that was once closed now because the highway of God’s people. Spared from death and brought into the land of life. But, as we continue to find in Heb. 11- not all received this gift!

**III. The Reward of Unbelief**

The fact is, not all have faith! Although the Israelites are safe under the care of Moses the good shepherd, there are others who try to follow though this path in the sea. So why was the Egyptian army drowned in the sea? Why did the walls of water fall down on them? Well, it was an act of God to be sure- but as far as Heb. 11 would have us know- it was because Pharaoh and the Egyptians did not have faith! Without faith, it is impossible to walk through the valley of death and not be swept away! Without faith, it is impossible to please God and it is impossible to enter into the promised land! It is not surprising that people who do not believe have a hard time understanding Christians. Spiritual things are discerned spiritually- without the Holy Spirit, mankind cannot see nor do they understand the things of the faith. So let’s consider what Pharaoh did not have. First, he did not have the promise of safety and salvation from God. Second, he rejected Moses as the true leader. Third, he did not accept the LORD as the one, true God. Fourth, he did not understand how or why the water was piled upon in a wall on either side. And fifth, he did not have faith. So Pharaoh did not receive the promise, did not believe in God nor his promise- and thus he could not receive that which was promised. It was a doomed effort from the start. So Pharaoh sends his army into the middle of the sea to pursue the Israelites, but the LORD looks down on them in judgement. First, the wheel of their chariots get stuck in mud and then they fall off. Second, the wind stops blowing and holding up the sea. Third, the water returns to its place and the entire army of Pharaoh is plunged in the depts. So Pharaoh who had once oppressed Israel would oppress them no more. He who had killed the male children had his own firstborn son killed by the avenging angel. The mighty king of Egypt would try to keep the Hebrews under his thumb find himself and his army the object of God’s wrath. As the title of our sermon makes clear- by faith, some crossed the Red Sea. Not all crossed- because not all have faith! As for the Egyptian army- not one of them remained. Even as Paul prayed for in II Thes. 3:2-3. This is the very thing that Israel received- and it is a sure promise and picture of the deliverance that we all will receive one day. Instead of being drowned in the water of the Red Sea, on the last day all of our enemies will be cast into the lake of fire! Or cast out into the bottomless pit. This is the promised deliverance that those who live by faith have received! So then, by faith we know that Jesus Christ will protect us from our enemies and that He will bring us safely to our eternal home!

To conclude, after the Red Sea crossing two things happened. The Egyptian army was dead, and the Israel congregation had grown in faith in God and in His appointed servant. God is glorified as He does great work in a seemingly impossible situation. A trial that would wreck and unbeliever serves to strengthen the faith of His people! Jesus is our way- He has opened the way for us to pass though the valley of death so that we arrive safely on the other side. By faith in Jesus, we too will pass through the sea! By faith some crossed the Red Sea as they looked for the salvation of the LORD. So may we live by faith- when we see our enemies like the devil, the world and even death- knowing that through Christ we too will overcome!