

The Art of Standing Still

Had Israel not stood still at the Red Sea as commanded by God, they would not have seen His salvation. We need to learn to stand still to get God's guidance.



Psalm 46:10 admonishes, "Be still, and know that I am God." To stand still and trust God is often the most difficult thing a Christian is called upon to do. Standing still is not a substitute for progress. Rather, it is a prerequisite of progress. We will not make progress in the Christian life unless we press forward, but unless we first learn to stand still, to listen and trust and obey, we will be without direction when we do press ahead.

Psalm 46 exalts God as the refuge and strength of His children. It acclaims Him as omnipotent, able to cast mountains into the sea and remove even the earth. He can destroy the weapons of war and make its carnage to cease. After the psalmist acclaimed the power and glory of God and declared His willingness to help His people, he told them to "be still" and know who God is.

It is important that we be stirred into activity. Yet there are times when we must be still and listen to God, be still and learn of Him, be still and let Him work. He can solve our problems, ease our frustrations, quiet our fears, and make a way where there is no way.

Abraham Listened and Obeyed

Abraham became still and listened to God. When he did, God said to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2).

Abraham must have been amazed and stunned at the instructions that came to him, but he neither argued with God nor offered excuse. God may sometimes speak things to us that we do not like to hear. He may appoint a trying task. But God never uses anyone in a large way until He has fully tested and tried that person.

It was in the furnace of trial that Abraham proved his worth. He showed us how to be still, to stay quiet under great pressure. When God spoke, he listened, trusted, and obeyed. He mastered the art of standing still, not through inaction but by steadfast obedience to the revealed will of God. He proved that his love for God knew no bounds. And then God blessed him. The ram, which God provided to offer instead of Isaac, shows that God

makes a way for those who listen to His voice and do His bidding.

"Stand . . . and See the Salvation of the Lord"

"Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" was the command given Israel when they faced the greatest peril of their lives. They had fled the bondage of Egypt, and it looked for a time as if they might make a clear getaway. But God, who was directing their flight, turned their course and led them over against the Red Sea.

Some may ask, "Didn't God know the armies of Egypt were in close pursuit?" Yes, He knew, and that, I think, is why He led the Israelites as He did. God works in many ways His wonders to perform. The Red Sea, which threatened to be their destruction, proved to be their salvation.

Get the picture. Before the Israelites is the sea, and pressing from behind is the host of Pharaoh's army. It is an hour of great distress. Had Israel disobeyed God and fled, every man seeking his own welfare, all would have been chaos and disaster. But the multitude stood still, and God opened a way where

there was no way. They marched through the Red Sea on dry ground, and the pursuing Egyptians were drowned.

"Be Still, and Know"

Notice that the order to go forward followed the first and more important order, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" or as Psalm 46:10 puts it, "Be still, and know that I am God." The second order, "Go forward," could not have been given had the first order, "Stand still," been disobeyed.

Had Israel jumped the gun on God that day, they would not have seen His salvation. But they stood still in the face of what seemed certain, terrible loss. They stood, they listened, they trusted, they obeyed, and therefore, they saw God's salvation.

They gave Moses, the man of God, a chance to stretch forth his rod. They waited while God rolled back the Red Sea, and then they were told to go forward.

Memorials of the Provision of God

The crossing of the Jordan River forty years later differed from this

incident in that the priests were told to enter the stream. The river did not part until the soles of their feet touched the water. There was a standing still in this victory also, for when the priests reached midstream, they stood firm until all Israel had crossed over the Jordan.

You may remember that twelve men were chosen, one from each of the tribes of Israel, to take from the midst of Jordan from the place where the priests stood firm, twelve stones and carry them to Canaan's shore to be set up as a memorial of the miraculous crossing.

So it is today. From the place where we stood firm under pressure, from these midstream experiences, we gather the things which mark our Christian progress and keep them before us as memorials of the wonderful provision of God in times of stress.

Getting Ahead of God

It was Solomon who wrote, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Good ventures sometimes boomerang because they are untimely. We all need to learn to stand still, stand steadfast in our God-given tasks, to

get God's guidance.

A besetting fault among Christians in this restless age is the tendency to get ahead of God. We are impatient. We cannot wait. Things have to go. We feel we must do something, and often we do the wrong thing.

We loathe guard duty, being a sentry, walking a beat back and forth, getting nowhere. So we take the initiative. We force the issue. We hope God is leading because we are on the march; we are doing something.

All such marchings are ventures in tragedy. It makes no difference how imperative a course of action seems to be, unless a beckoning Christ stands at the end of the road we take, we will lose our way.

On the other hand, it makes no difference how suicidal a course may seem, what loss and sacrifice it may hold forth, when the voice of God says distinctly, "This is the way; walk ye in it," we dare not turn aside. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). "Be still, and know that I am God."

Selected

**Christ is our Peace; the sins of YESTERDAY
By His most precious blood are washed away.
Christ is our Life; the trials of TODAY
He bears for us who walked life's toilsome way.
Christ is our Hope; the FUTURE of all
unknown
Is in His care who watches from the throne.**