

When God Selects your Path

1.24.2021

Message 4

Introduction: We all claim we want to be led by God until His path becomes different from ours.

A. A few weeks ago, Julie and I drove to Jacksonville, FL.

1. I had a particular route I wanted to take, but to make sure, I used GPS.
2. I appreciated the GPS UNTIL its route deviated from mine.
3. Going to Florida was fine, but coming back, my GPS had a different plan than I did.
 - a. So I yelled at Google leaving Jacksonville.
 - b. I yelled at Google somewhere in Alabama.
 - c. But once my confidence was higher in myself than in the GPS, somewhere north of Birmingham, AL, I stopped listening to the GPS because I didn't need it anymore.

B. The examples of God's people, Jewish and Gentile, are full of moments when we claim we want to be led by God but fuss with Him about the path He chooses.

1. Through Exodus, this is a common theme.
2. Because God does not choose the same paths or directions that we do.
3. **Most of us have more confidence in our ability to navigate our problems than we have in God's plans and paths.**
 - a. Oh, we may pray hard at the beginning of a crisis:

b. But as soon as we get our feet under us and our confidence recovers, we turn off the voice of the Holy Spirit and take our own route.

C. Today's passage features one of the many times that God doesn't lead us according to the quickest route.

1. God is not as concerned with our progress but with the process.
2. God 430 years in Egypt was part of God's process.
3. Moses' 40 years in Midian was part of God's process.
4. And now, God would lead Israel through a route of His choosing.

Exodus 13:17–18 (CSB)

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God **did not lead** them along the road to the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearby; for God said, "The people will change their minds and return to Egypt if they face war." 18 So he led the people around toward the Red Sea along the road of the wilderness. And the Israelites left the land of Egypt in battle formation.

1. There is always a faster path.

A. Does anybody ever try to beat the time on your GPS?

1. That is one of the best reasons to use a GPS on a trip.
2. Can I beat the time getting there.
3. As Americans, faster is ALWAYS better.
 - a. Our cars may register 120 or faster, even though the limits are 70 or 80.
 - b. Today, we have all of these time-saving devices that help us get more done more quickly.

B. God isn't tied to time like we are.

1. In fact, most of the world does not view time as Americans do.

2. One quick story to illustrate this point.

“A Westerner, with a first world, 21st-century mentality, was travelling with native tribesmen on a work project. For several days, there was rapid progress, much distance covered, and many of the Westerner’s boxes were ticked – they were making good progress, goals for the expedition were being achieved, it was busy and productive.

And then the tribesmen stopped. For no obvious reason. And nothing happened. Nothing obvious was being done. The Westerner became frustrated with this lack of progress, this waste of time, this enforced waiting. His timetable was slipping and he was not meeting his agenda. Eventually, standing it no longer, he asked the reason for the delay. The answer stopped him short –We had been moving too fast and had to wait for our souls to catch up”.”¹

3. Some of us feel like that now:

- a. We need a break and some margin for our souls to catch up.
- b. Our need for rest and margin are part of the reasons that God instituted the Sabbath.
- c. God wants us to understand that His perspective of time is totally different than ours.
- d. God’s concern is more about who we are becoming and not what we are doing.
- e. And that path’s that God lays out for us reflect that purpose.

C. There were at least three ways Israel could have journeyed to the Promised Land. **MAP SLIDE**

1. The top route is the fastest route but was heavily guarded by Egyptian outposts.

¹ <https://equipforlifecoaching.com/2016/letting-your-soul-catch-up/> (Accessed 1/21/2021)

a. "In ancient times Thutmose III (1479–1425 bc) had taken only ten days to travel from Egypt to Gaza by this route, a journey of about 150 miles".²

b. It was at least half the distance of the 3rd route. (Deut 1:2)

2. The middle route was treacherous, rugged, and lacked water.

3. The last route, however, was God's route.

a. It was the longest of the three.

b. But, it took the people to Mt. Sinai.

c. This was the land that Moses had spent the previous 40 years of his life.

d. And it was at Mt. Horeb or Mt. Sinai that God had met with Moses in the burning bush.

D. But at the time, Moses doesn't know any of this.

1. God promises to lead Israel.

2. God promises to protect Israel.

3. But God doesn't explain every detail of the plan.

4. The narrator of Exodus 13 says, "God said, "The people will change their minds and return to Egypt if they face war." ³

Exodus 13 teaches us several things about how God leads His people.

2. God sees what we do not.

A. Surely, victorious Israel could have walked right through the opposition, right?

² Eugene Carpenter, [Exodus](#), ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 499–500.

³ [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), Ex 13:17.

1. If we had drawn the battle plan, we would have marched right through the middle.
2. Surely, the God who whooped Pharaoh would keep whooping the enemy.

B. But the path God chose for Israel wasn't the direct path.

1. God knew they would not survive the opposition.
2. It wasn't that God was weak, but that Israel was.
3. They would quit the first time they had opposition.
4. So God led them away from the enemy.

C. God knew that the indirect route held lessons that the direct way didn't.

1. God's path involved places without enough food.
2. God's path avoided the water and the wells of the northern route.
3. God's path took Israel to where God was.
 - a. God had prepared a place in the Wilderness.
 - b. A place where God would meet them and give them His Word and Law.
 - c. There are no shortcuts to the Mountain of God.
 - d. There are no shortcuts to getting in God's presence.
4. Our plans race us from one destination to the next, in a straight line.
5. God's plan avoids the comfortable so that HE can meet us in the difficult. (Picture [Jabal Musa, Moses' Mountain](#)).

3. God understands what we do not.

A. We often give ourselves too much credit.

1. Just because you think you are up to the task, it doesn't mean you actually are.
2. If we try to do what God has called us to do, without God's Spirit and anointing, we will fail every time.

B. "The reason given for this longer route is that the more direct path would probably lead to conflict that could prove so discouraging to Israel that they might turn back to Egypt".⁴

1. When we step outside of God's path and timing, we end up discouraged.
2. **A discouraged people are a defeated people.**
3. God knew the propensity of Israel's heart.
 - a. They were prone to discouragement (slavery will do that).
 - b. They were prone to give up and return to the familiar (slavery will do that).
 - c. They were prone to murmur and complain (slavery will do that).

C. God knows our hearts.

1. The human heart is deceitful above all things.
2. The human heart is full of that which is wrong and void of that which is good.
3. God knows what we can handle, where our limits are, what we need, and how to best accomplish His plans.

⁴ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 185.

4. The next time God is leading you, and the path isn't linear, you have two options:

a. You can murmur and complain.

b. Or you can expect that God knows where He is leading you.

c. It could be that God is leading you away from a battle you won't win and into the Presence of God where you can't lose.

4. When God is leading you:

A. You can trust God's path.

1. We can trust God's path.

2. Isaiah 55:8-9 (CSB)

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways."

This is the LORD's declaration.

⁹"For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

3. It is time for some of you all to get out of the driver's seat.

4. When God is leading you, you can trust God's path.

a. He won't take you on the easiest route.

b. He won't take you the fastest route.

c. But you can trust that God knows where He is taking you.

B. You can trust God's plan.

1. Some of you aren't trusting God's plan.

2. When we start looking at Exodus 14, and God leads Israel to where their backs are up against the water, His people began complaining.
3. When you complain and murmur against God's plans, you are telling Him you know what we need better than He does.
4. When you complain and murmur, you accuse God of making a mistake.
5. When you complain and murmur, you accuse God of falsely leading you and failing you.
6. All of these responses are sin.
7. Instead, I can have peace amid storms, knowing that God has a plan.
 - a. His plan includes pain where mine doesn't.
 - b. His plan involves seas I can't swim and mountains I can't climb.
 - c. But God knows what He is doing, and even today, His arm is not short, and His hand is not weak. Isa. 59:1
8. Do you trust God?

C. You can trust God's protection.

1. God knew about protection and provision that Israel didn't know yet.
 - a. God led Israel on the southern route because He knew they would not defeat the enemy to the north.
 - b. God also knew that He would lead them by His presence, a cloud by day and a fire by night.
 - c. God knew that He was going to meet them at Sinai.
 - d. God knew that He was going to provide water in the wilderness.
 - e. God knew, and Israel was to trust Him.

2. If you won't trust God on the path to the Promised Land, you won't trust God in the Promised Land.

Closing: Just like Israel, we are on a journey.

A. Just like Israel, we are being led by God.

1. Israel was led by a fire on the outside; we are led by a fire on the inside.
2. God's presence dwelled apart from Israel, but God lives inside believers.

B. Yet, many of us are struggling with the path God has chosen.

1. We are scared.
2. We are confused.
3. We are unsure.
4. And so we have stopped.
5. We are hesitant to move forward because the pull of where we have been is stronger than the interest of where we are going.

C. Here is how I want us to respond to this message:

1. Would EVERYONE who is wanting God to lead them join me across the front.
2. I want to pray for clarity.
3. I want to pray for God's leading and presence to be clear.
4. I want to pray for you to walk in anointing.
5. Don't turn back, don't give up, and don't stop.
6. Because God is leading you somewhere far-better than where you have been.