

Week Commencing 2020

Mid-week Bible Study - prepared by Allen and Sue Legate

Preparation: read through Exodus chapter 14

## ON THE BRINK



### **Exodus Chap 14 : 15 – 31**

*Then the Lord said to Moses, Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch your hand out over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. Then the angel of God, who had been travelling in front of the Israelites, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them coming between the Egyptians and the Israelites bringing darkness to one side and light to the other so neither went near the other all night long. 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 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 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. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. 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 ... and the Lord swept them into the sea. Not one survived. 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.*

I'd like you to imagine that you are numbered among the 2+ million Israelites standing at the water's edge of the Red Sea. Take a look over your shoulder at the huge dust storm gathering in the distance behind you and the sun glinting on the chariots, swords and shields of the pursuing Egyptian army. Literally caught between the devil and the deep blue sea! I guess you would definitely be caught up in fear.

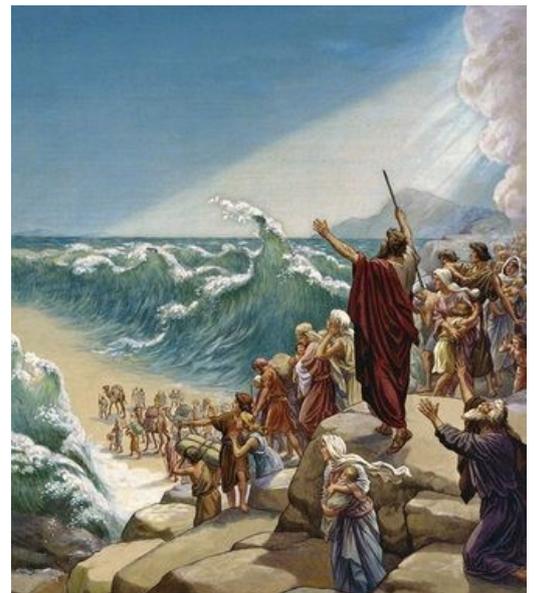
How did this happen? Some chap called Moses, who probably no one had heard of or remembered, had appeared out of the desert, caused mayhem at Pharaoh's palace with a few amazing miracles and had told everyone pack up all their belongings and follow him to freedom. Great! But now they were trapped with nowhere to go and about to be slaughtered.

### **How would you imagine you would feel?**

Recent conversations with our neighbours and telephone calls with our family and friends leave no doubt that now that lockdown is being eased many of us have found new fears.

### **Dr Martin Marshall, chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners:**

*"We're predicting a huge surge in mental health problems," he said. "Millions of people who had anxiety or depression were getting worse, and a new wave of people suffering psychological distress would follow. These are people who have previously been well, not had any past history of mental health problems, who have just been completely freaked out by this crisis."*



## What can we learn from this passage of Scripture to help us all today?

The Israelites had been enslaved for a long time (some commentators suggest 400 years or more) then suddenly they were released from their bondage. They would have felt uncertainty, anxiety and even fear. Having travelled a few days they were caught between the Red Sea and the advancing Egyptian army which caused them to wish they were back in slavery ... at least they would be alive instead of facing certain slaughter.

We have only been in 'bondage' for three months and last week I went out for the first time other than chauffeuring Sue once a week to do our shopping. I visited B&Q as we were in need of a few items to enable me to do some jobs around the home. It was unnerving, even fearful!

Moses was perhaps the only one who knew that God was still in charge even under the impossible odds facing them. He held his hand over the waters and they parted giving the Israelites free passage to safety. The first step opened up a new vista and a new future and their enemies were destroyed.

Many of us have said how wonderful have been the telephone calls and Zoom meetings over these last weeks, but it has not been the same as meeting together in person and sharing fellowship together in one place. Now many of us standing between lockdown and stepping out are nervous of taking that first step. We need to exercise both courage and faith, whilst still being sensible and taking care.

### **For discussion:**

*Who else in Scripture faced a similar sense of fear whilst standing on the brink of the unknown?*

*What are our main concerns just now?*

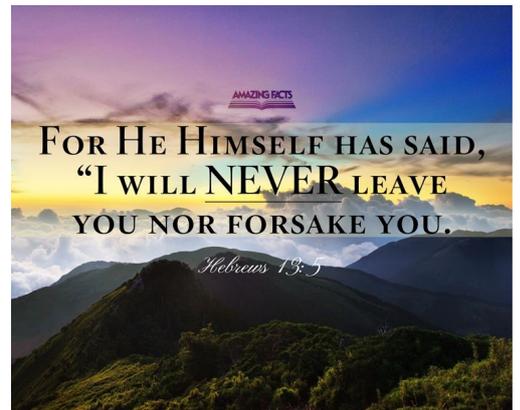
*How can we best equip ourselves to face the uncertainty of the immediate future?*

In every case God provided the means of safety and from the very first step their release was assured.

Whatever we may feel at this time, whatever we fear, we are assured that God is with us and will never leave us.

I want to quote the words of Christian author Catherine Campbell:  
***"Our current circumstances can make us bitter or make us better."***

**The answer is in our hands.**



### **Prayer:**

Father we learn from your Word that we are not to fear as you hold us safe in the hollow of your hand and that you surround us in your everlasting arms. We thank you that we can have confidence in your promises which are everlasting and true. Keep each of us and all our loved ones; family, friends and our church fellowship safe and secure this day and always. Amen

