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Faith in the Face of the Impossible

Take the first step
that God gives you,
so that you
can praise Him.



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By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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Life's Impossibilities

All right, thank you very much. And hello again dear radio friends, how in the world are you? Doing all right? I'm glad to be back with you. I look forward to these times of sharing with you from the Word of God. We're still discussing this matter of faith as a way of life. Remember the simplistic definition of faith that I gave you some time ago: Faith consists of taking appropriate action based on the promise of God. If God says it, then I'm going to act on it. That's faith.

We've come now to Hebrews 11:29. Hebrews 11:29, "By faith they [that is, God's people] passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians ... [trying] to do were drowned." That whole story of the Red Sea crossing is a dramatic thing, have you read it recently? You would think that God would lead them in a way that they wouldn't get completely caught by the Egyptians. There were other ways to run away, in other words. Other routes they may have chosen.

But God said, "Now, you go over and camp by the sea. You go over and camp by the sea." God had already told Moses, "I'll harden Pharaoh's heart, he'll follow after them. I'll be honored upon Pharaoh and upon all his host and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And so it says, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea."

Now at this point, historians tell us, they were camped in a location that allowed them no exit. Because there were mountainous territories on either side, and the sea in front of them, and the Egyptians behind them. It would seem, really, that God led them right straight into a trap.

Well, we know better now, of course, because we can look back from the perspective of the centuries and see what actually happened. But had you and I been in the crowd that day, we might have felt very differently about it. You have to see it from their point of view, as well. So they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" [We'd be better off slaves than dying out here.] "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Well Moses knew what was going happen. He said, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Now, evidently, between verse 14 of Exodus 14 and verse 15, Moses went away and said, "Lord, you'd better do something pretty soon. Things are getting pretty hot here." Because verse 15 says, "the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me?" Moses must have been calling up heaven about that time, because the atmosphere is getting pretty tense. So God said, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." "I'll harden Pharaoh's heart," He said, "the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get ... honor upon Pharaoh, and ... his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God... removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face and stood behind them. So, there was light on one side for the Israelites and darkness on the other side for the Egyptians. And so, the one side, the Egyptians, "came not near the other [the Israelites] all night" long. You know then what happened. God's people marched on through the way that had been cleared for them in the bed of the Red Sea and went on to the other side. The Egyptian army, now, following close behind got into the middle of the sea and God simply rolled the waters back again and covered them over.

Now he said, "By faith, they [that is, Moses and all of God's people] passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians trying to do were drowned." Very short statement that covers a tremendously dramatic experience. Now why does he say this? Well, obviously, it took faith to take that first step, didn't it? It says, they passed over on dry ground. I don't know how dry it was. How dry is the seashore after the tide goes out? Still pretty damp, isn't it? And you can see that, just like a tremendous tide, (that's the nearest thing one could use to describe it) just like a tremendous tide ebbing -- going out -- the waters had receded from before God's people and now came the command, "All right, pick up your stuff and go." And horses and oxen and wagons and families and children and household stuff all this lumbering along in the bed of the sea. But it was dry enough for them to do it.

It took faith to take that first step, and on they went. And I'm sure they must have looked around them wonderingly and said, "Can this be possible? Are we dreaming? Is this a dream? The water is on either side of us, but here's a highway. It looks like God built us a highway across the sea." And so, on they went across. And got safe over on the other side.

"By faith," it said, "they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." What do you and I make of this? It's more than a pretty story. It's more than the account of a divine miracle. What do we make of it?

It's listed here to remind you and me that life's impossibilities always have the option of going forward with God.

"Why are you crying to me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Life's impossibilities always have the option of going forward with God. There is always another step of faith you can take even when things are impossible.

Will you learn that lesson with me today? I have to relearn it all the time -- I'm such a "human" human being that I have to relearn these precious lessons of faith and grace as the years go by. So, learn it with me. Are you up against something impossible? What does it have to do with? With money, or with health, or with a relationship with other human beings? With something, a domestic situation in your home? Or something on the job? Or something in the community? What is it? You're face to face with an impossible situation, and you say to yourself, "Oh, I could just tear my hair. I don't know what to do. There isn't anything I can do. This is terrible. What am I going to do?" And you just go round and around in a series of fret and worry and care and despair and you're just up against something impossible, right?

Well, my dear friend, remember the Red Sea. Mountains and hills on either side and the Egyptians behind them and the sea in front of them. They were caught in the trap. Absolutely impossible situation, how were they going to fight against all these heavily armed chariots of war together with their skilled and experienced and toughened Egyptian soldiers? How were they going to fight against all these forces? Couldn't possibly be done. And so, they were quite right in saying, "Well, this is it. We're going to die here instead of dying in Egypt decently, we're going to die here, horribly." That was what they thought the option was. But instead, there was always God's forward step, "...speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:" "Stretch out your rod over the sea, I'll make a way."

Now I can't begin to tell you what that first forward step of yours can be. If there's something between you and another person, it might be the first step toward reconciliation that God would lead you to take. If there's some problem on the job, God would lead you

to do something constructive and helpful on the job that would establish you in a different light. If there's some problem in the community, with neighbors, or with community action of some sort, God will lead you to take the step that would establish you as being helpful and public spirited and a person that is to be appreciated. He will even if the impossible situation has to do with your own physical health. The doctor may have told you that you'll never walk again. Or the doctor may have told you that your eyes are failing, inexorably the curtain is being pulled on your eyesight, and you have that awful sense of despair. "Will I ever be able to see the sunset again, or the turning of the maple leaves in the fall," and so on? And you have that awful sadness and despair that comes when you're facing an impossible physical situation.

Beloved, listen, even in situations like that that have to do with your health and your body, and there's nothing that you, personally, seem to be able to do about it; wait on God; He'll give you a step of faith that you can take. While it may not reverse the course of that condition which is going on in your body, it will give you absolute victory over it and make you a blessing.

There's always something. You're faced with an impossible situation. It says, "By faith they crossed the Red Sea."

Take the first step that God gives you, so that you can praise Him.

Dear Father, today lead us through our Red Sea by faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Until I meet you once again by way of radio, walk with the King today, and be a blessing!