

Why Running Away Won't Bring Freedom from Your Bondage

Note: This is the first of a two-part series. Stay tuned Wednesday.

We are in a generation of runners. At the point of crisis, God's children tend to run from the battle instead of defeating the very enemy that has them fleeing.

People leave assignments. They quit jobs for the wrong reasons. They break off relationships.

People run from church to church, hoping to leave their past behind them. That never works. Their undefeated enemy, whether it's a spirit of rejection or anger or outright rebellion, shows up the very first day they visit their new church.

Someone visited Revival Church in Detroit a couple of years ago. One of the first things this child of God said to me was, "I've been kicked out of every church I've been in. I'm determined that this won't happen here too!"

That was a great plan, but, unfortunately, she was unwilling to battle the demons of old. Sadly, she didn't last more than several weeks with us.

Freedom

We so crave freedom from whatever bondage we are experiencing that we often demand an immediate yet premature resolution to our captivity.

In Portland, Oregon, a man was scheduled for release from prison in less than a week after 272 days behind bars. He couldn't wait. He escaped with six days left on his sentence!

He was caught just hours later.

Sometimes the quickest route to freedom is not the most direct, or the easiest, or the most obvious. In fact, sometimes it's to back up and entice our enemy to pursue us!

"Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, so that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal Zephon. Opposite it you shall camp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, "They are confused in the land. The wilderness has shut them in." So I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he shall pursue them. And I will be honored because of Pharaoh and because of all his army, so that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so'" (Ex. 14:1-4, MEV).

"They were already on the borders of the desert, and a short march would have placed them beyond the reach of pursuit, as the chariots of Egypt could have made little progress over dry and yielding sand." – Jamieson-Fausset-Brown

The Israelites could have continued in the direction they were heading, and they would have been out of the reach of Pharaoh should he decide to summon his armies and chariots to pursue them.

It surely seemed to be madness for Moses to direct the people to turn back.

Freedom was to be had! It was right in front of them! But, their mandate was to turn back and to face the enemy they fled from.

I propose we embrace leaders like Moses today—those who aren't trying to lead us into the Land of Promise while avoiding the challenges, struggles and pursuing armies that God desires for us to defeat. We need leaders who lead into trouble for the sake of victory!

It is a valid question: Why would God cause freedom to be

delayed? Why would he put people he loves in grave danger? Two simple reasons:

1. God will get glory.
2. They shall know God is the Lord.

God is interested in our freedom. He's also interested in His glory.

"I the Lord have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You and appoint You for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images" (Is. 42:6-8, MEV).

This is such an important lesson for all of us. God's primary motivation is not to make our lives easier, nor to give us immediate satisfaction as we pursue freedom. As it always has been, and always will be, God is focused on His name being known for the sake of the generations.

We must trust God's wisdom, His truth, if we desire to experience freedom. His truth will very often violate our own wisdom or common sense:

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free'" (John 8:31-32, MEV).

Note how 250 years later Gideon had an important point of reference as he dealt with his own issue of captivity:

"Then Gideon said to him, 'O my lord, if the Lord is with us, then why has all this happened to us? Where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about? They said, "Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt?" Yet now the Lord has forsaken

us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites'" (Judges 6:13, MEV).

Gideon heard of the of Moses and the Hebrews. That story would not have been the same if God hadn't caused them to turn back and face a fierce enemy.

"But Moses said to the people, 'Fear not! Stand firm! And see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see again. The Lord shall fight for you, while you hold your peace'" (Exo. 14:13-14, MEV).

Instead of taking matters into their own hands, devising plans and strategies and moving according to their own wisdom, God was instructing them to stay put and be silent. How hard this must have been for them! What a lesson in faith this was!

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel, so that they go forward. And as for you, lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; then the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. As for Me, surely, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, so that they shall follow them, and I will be honored through Pharaoh, through all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I am honored through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen'" (Exodus 14:15-18, MEV).

Quit crying and follow my instructions! Now it was time to advance, in the direction God revealed—right into an impossible sea. What kind of God was leading them? It seemed He was a monster, bent on their sure demise. How could God profess to love anybody if He is pushing people to the limits of their sanity by toying with them as pawns on a great, seemingly demented game board? No wonder they would end up demanding to return to Egypt!

What they needed to understand, and ultimately would, is that freedom isn't found at the place of safety. It's found in God's presence. Where He is, there is freedom, even if that means turning back to face the enemy:

"Now the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17, MEV). {eoa}

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