

Those Red Sea Moments

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Date to be determined

Greetings to everyone on this Sabbath day.

I have a question for you: how was your week? I don't know about you, but God's Sabbath can never seem to get here soon enough; the pressures of this world, the pressures of life in general just keep building. Even when nothing is going wrong – and good luck with that one now-a-days, as it seems there is always *something* going wrong – pressure is still there. Life sort of reminds me of a pressure cooker. For those of you that have never seen or cooked with a pressure cooker, it's a pot that has a lockable lid, and in the middle of the lid there is a vent with a pressure relief valve sitting on top. As a kid we called it “the jigglers,” because when the pressure builds up so much, it just starts jiggling. When heat is applied the liquid in the pot begins to boil, and when liquid boils it gives off steam, but in a pressure cooker the steam is maintained, and because it has no way to escape, the pressure just keeps building and building until it blows the jigglers. Life now-a-days is like that pressure cooker; the heat is turned up and the pressures of this world just keep getting greater and greater. We are so close to *everything* in this world blowing its jigglers!

Once again, how was your week? How has everything gone for you in your life since the Feast of Tabernacles? For many, it hasn't gone good. Many are having spiritual battles, unconverted mates are on a rampage, some have lost their mates and they're faced with all of the struggles of making it alone. Some have lost their jobs. I know of others that are business owners and the business has literally dried-up and they are looking at shutting the doors. There are many money problems, health problems, car problems, and just plain problems...and the list goes on and on and on. Me, personally, I was blessed with a *fantastic* job after May 27, 2012! I didn't think that I would ever get another engineering job. For 11 long years it was an elusive dream. I couldn't buy an engineering job! In the technical field, if too much time elapses you're no longer of value and you're not up-to-date with the current technological advances. And to top it all off, I have the age issue going on. What company wants to hire an older man when they can invest in younger talent? After eleven years, I all but gave up! Then after May 27th Mr. Weinland mentioned that I should probably begin looking once again. I made one phone call – *one phone call* – and was immediately hired. It was a miracle! The project that I was put on was supposed to last approximately ten years. Knowing where we are in time, that would be the last job that I would ever need; however, just prior to leaving for the Feast the company announced that the client had abruptly mothballed the whole project. Over one hundred people were laid off in one day. When I returned from the Feast I asked the man that hired me, "If you were in my shoes, what would you do?" His comment, "Find another job." So here we go again. What do I do now? I have once again come to the Red Sea.

Brethren, how about you? What Red Sea moments are you facing? What Red Sea moments are you going to face this year? I'll guarantee you one thing, you are going to have those moments. Hence, the title of this sermon, *Those Red Sea Moments*.

Turn to Exodus 14:8. You can't begin to talk about this subject without reviewing the *original* Red Sea moment. We'll pick up the story after the children of Israel had exited Egypt and they were now at the Red Sea. Again, **Exodus 14:8 – And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel, and the children of Israel went out with a high hand.** Israel had been slaves to the Egyptians for 400 years! All that they, and the generations before them had ever

known was bondage and cruelty. They were beaten. Their children were murdered. And then God entered their lives, and for the first time, and He began to bless them and began to take care of them. Israel saw firsthand the might and the power of God Almighty. Whatever He said, He did. They witnessed countless miracles, they witnessed the end of slavery, and freedom was offered to them for the first time in their lives.

Exodus 12:36 states...**And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians so that they gave unto them such things as they required**, whatever they requested, they were given. **And they spoiled**, they plundered, **the Egyptians**. They left Egypt with a high hand, and jubilation and relief abounded.

Continuing in **Exodus 14:9** – **But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon. And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and because the Egyptians marched after them they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.** Now that, that was a short-lived freedom. At that particular moment, from a purely physical perspective, the children of Israel were right – they had every reason to be afraid. Pharaoh and the Egyptians hated them with a passion! Because of Israel, Pharaoh's son had died. Because of Israel, every Egyptian's firstborn, both man and beast, was dead. Because of Israel, the entire nation of Egypt was decimated, and then on top of it, "*Why did we give Israel our silver, our gold, and everything else?*" It did not take long for their hearts to be hardened and they wanted revenge.

Israel went out with a high hand, and in that hand, **Exodus 12:34** says that they **took their dough before it was leavened and bound their kneading troughs in their clothes and threw it over their shoulders and they left in a great hurry**. As slaves, they probably didn't have too much to take, so a few essentials and whatever the Egyptians gave them was all that they left with. Now there was a great army rapidly approaching Israel and they had weapons of mass destruction – at least what was available at the time – and Egypt intended to use them. There was going to be a massacre and Israel knew it. Now, *that* was a Red Sea moment. When you really think about it, this makes many of our Red Sea moments seem trivial at best. Everything that is written in the Bible was recorded for us so that we can learn from it and so that we can spiritually mature.

Let's break this story down and see what we can learn from this event. Let's go back to [Exodus 14:10] – **verse 10** – **And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.** If I or you were in their shoes or sandals, of and by ourselves, we too would have been afraid. As I mentioned, they knew that they were going to die. Are we so different? Do *you* think that we would have done or reacted any differently? We can and we sometimes do react the same way as the Israelites whenever we face a Red Sea moment. We have worries and we have questions: Why is this happening to me? What am I going to do now?

Brethren, fear is a natural reaction because that is the way that God made us. It is actually spiritually healthy to have a balanced fear and to realize that without God, "I just can't do it." This applies to every aspect and every situation in our life. Verse 10 states: "And they were sore afraid: and the children of

Israel cried out unto the LORD.” That is one thing that Israel did right; they cried out to God, and *that* should be our first response to whatever trial or adversity comes our way. Scripture is filled with many examples of this, especially the book of Psalms.

So if you would, turn with me to **Psalm 31:1** – To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David, **In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.** Do we put all of our trust, all of our faith in God? If we want deliverance, if we want deliverance, we better **...let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me...** ask God to listen to you and to hear your prayers **...deliver me speedily: be my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name's sake lead me and guide me.** That is God's promise. Whatever our problems are cry out to God and seek His guidance. And when you think about it, crying out to God should be our very first response, our first action to every aspect and moment in our life – what we think, what we say, what we do, and how we react – we should cry out to God for *His* help, *His* guidance. God *is* our Rock and Fortress and He will lead us, He will guide us, for His name's sake. He promises to provide, but we must always seek Him.

Continuing on back in **Exodus 14:11** – **And they**, the children of Israel, **said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.** It didn't take long for them to err. The first recorded mistake that they made was that *they forgot*. They forgot all that God did for them and they forgot to place their trust in God. They forgot and they lost hope.

Turn to Exodus 4:29. This account was when Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt. They hadn't confronted Pharaoh at this time yet. **Exodus 4:29** – **Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel; and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed. And when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked down upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and they worshipped.** This account doesn't sound much like, "Leave us alone and let us serve the Egyptians." They had so yearned to leave slavery and abuse they were able to remain positive and worship God when everything was looking up, when everything was going their way, but as soon as they were faced with that Red Sea moment, they lost faith. It was evident that they really didn't trust in God.

It's hard to believe when you read through a story like this that Israel forgot all of the miracles that they had witnessed firsthand...and they forgot them very quickly. They saw Moses' staff turn into a snake, they witnessed all of the plagues, and they witnessed God's direct intervention in their lives. They experienced God's might and power and they were recipients of His direct promises. They were blessed beyond measure, but they didn't keep it at the forefront of their mind. Brethren, do *you* remember all of the blessings, the miracles that you have been blessed with in *your* life? One thing that I always try to do in times of need, in times of trouble, in those Red Sea moments is to remember the times of God's direct intervention in Patty's and my life. Throughout the years we have encamped by the Red Sea so many times, and on top of it, we have experienced *so many* miracles – and when I say miracles, I mean literal miracles.

Earlier this year I was looking for a particular document and I came across my federal tax return for the year of 1978. Now, don't ask me why I still *had* it, but I was glad that I did. It brought back memories and it reminded me of God's blessings and how He intervenes. In that particular year I had lost my

engineering job and I took a job selling insurance; unfortunately, insurance isn't a get-rich-quick type of job. It doesn't pay off until your renewals and residuals begin to kick in. My taxable income for the entire year was around \$2800. I had my wife, Patty, and two children to take care of. I had a mortgage to pay – if memory serves me correctly it was around \$350 a month – then there were utilities, food, and everything else that goes along with making ends meet and taking care of a family. And then on top of it, there was our *main* obligation, 1st Tithe, 2nd Tithe, and I'll never forget it, it was our 3rd Tithe year. That was back in the days before Mr. Armstrong came to understand that 3rd Tithe was no longer required because we were already paying it into a government system to take care of the needy. We were paying an additional tithe that year to help the needy, and that year, we *were* the needy. How ironic!

Now, for those of you who are math wizards, \$350 for a mortgage payment times 12 months equals \$4200, and the last time that I checked \$4200 is greater than \$2800. Not only was there not enough for a mortgage, but there definitely wasn't enough to go around for all the tithes plus everything else. Now, *that* was a Red Sea moment. So what did we do? We definitely didn't eat steak that year! Soup beans and cornbread was a staple of life, and if memory serves me correctly, they *really* tasted good. But first and foremost, we paid 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Tithe diligently. We remembered the scripture in **Malachi 3:10** where it states, **Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, God says to put Him to the test, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*** The windows did not open immediately. God tested us. God allowed us to go through a whole year without enough money to survive. Would we diligently obey Him no matter what? We got a little bit behind on the mortgage, but we kept going, and with a couple months, we were all caught up again. We always had enough food to eat, we had the essentials, we *lived* our 3rd Tithe year, and God took care of us.

The amazing part in this whole story is we never realized that we didn't make enough money to survive, to pay our bills, until we filed our taxes. So where did it all come from? It came from the same God that opened the Red Sea. It came because of obedience. 1978 was a miracle year. The story didn't end there though. After the Feast, Patty came across an ad in the paper. A company just down the road from us was looking for some engineering help. With a little persuasion from her (and for those who know Patty, she has a way of being *very persuasive*) I applied for the job. I wasn't qualified for that position. Once again, I had been out of the field for a while also, however, the company literally begged me to take the job, and our financial problems were over. I made a greater income than I had *ever* made before – God's promise was fulfilled; He opened those windows. That particular job was the catalyst or springboard for some of the most rewarding jobs that I have ever had.

For those of you who have been around for quite some time, you probably had many of your own stories – never forget them! There is one scripture that I always try to keep in mind and it's **Deuteronomy 4:9 – Only take heed to yourself, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life: but teach them to your sons, and your sons' sons.** Remember Deuteronomy 4:9: “Take heed,” never forget what God *has* done for you. “Keep your soul diligently,” in other words, stay close to God, or those memories, those precious memories, will depart from you. Those memories of what God has done in the past are what will keep you going in times of distress, in times of need. Those memories will help you get through those Red Sea moments.

Another important aspect of that scripture is where it says to “teach them to your sons and your sons' sons.” Those of us who have been around for quite some time, those of us who have had many

experiences, we need to teach, we need to share those inspiring moment with our children, with *all* of God's children, God's Church.

If you are new or newer to God's calling and you haven't had the opportunity to experience many of your own memories, spend time listening to the "grey hairs." They're the ones that have put many miles on their sandals; they're the ones that have visited the Red Sea many of times. Also, spend time reading the pages of your Bible that were recorded for *your* benefit. All scripture was given for an example, for teaching, for inspiration. And what are a lot of the scriptures? They're stories, memories, miracles, events that should teach us and give us hope. The stories abound in those pages, but they are much more than stories. They are the *lives* of those that have gone before us. We are so blessed that God inspired them to be recorded for us. Let them be of encouragement to you in times of distress or need.

Now, let's go back to Exodus 14 and pick up the story in verse 11 again. **Exodus 14:11 – And they, the children of Israel, said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.** The next mistake that Israel made was they accused and blamed God's servant! They went from crying out to God for deliverance to blaming Moses, God's servant. They didn't realize it, but they were actually blaming God, because it was *God* that was leading Moses. If we are not careful we can make that same mistake.

Have you ever heard anyone blame the Church or accuse God for allowing a particular circumstance or situation? We have just experienced that with some that have left God's Church over the past couple of years – they blamed God's servant because we had entered into a Red Sea moment. In reality, they weren't blaming the Church, they were blaming God. Or how about when a child is born with a severe disability or a child dies? Some will carelessly ask, "How could a loving God allow this to happen?" In the midst of a major catastrophe some speak up and say that, "There is no God, because if there were He would have *never allowed* it to happen!" How foolish to entertain such thoughts.

Patty and I have lived through some of those moments also. When we decided to have our first child we had all of the dreams and desires of every first time parent. There is so much that we wanted to share, so much that we wanted to do with that child! We were young and we had our whole life ahead of us. Patty was one of the first in South Carolina to have a natural childbirth. She had gone into labor prematurely and as our son was being born the doctor noticed something *horribly wrong*; they immediately administered gas to Patty. She fought to stay awake and saying that she was supposed to deliver natural, until she fell asleep. A while later the doctor came to the waiting room and let me know that our son had severe physical deformities, and they asked if I wanted to see him. When I went in there was a 4lb 7oz little boy laying there crying; both legs and one arm had to be broken in order for him to be born, in order for Patti to survive. He had one of the worst cases of Arthrogryposis (a congenital arthritic and muscular disease) ever recorded. He would never walk. He would never be able to do even the basics of life by himself. He would never lead the life of a "normal" child. His life would be one of major surgery after major surgery *IF* he were to live. I went in to see Patty and I let her know.

Later, the hospital staff sat down with us and this was the advice that they gave us, "Walk away. Go home and pretend that this never happened. Your son will probably die, and if he lives he will never be 'normal' and you will *never have* a 'normal' life." Wow! What a Red Sea moment! What a life changer! Some would have walked away. Some would have blamed God. Some would have asked the question, "How can a loving God ever allow a child to be born like that?" The question is, "Did God make our son

that way?" No. Sometimes there are just complications. And then sometimes children with problems are just the by-products of generations of people living contrary to how God intended us to live. Mankind has gone off in his own direction. God has given mankind 6,000 years to prove that he can't do it right...and that is just a circumstance that happens. Could God have changed the outcome? Absolutely! He could have allowed Patty to miscarry or He could have miraculously healed our son, but He didn't. He allowed his life for a greater purpose. As we look back on his life, he lived for 37 years, and everything that we went through together, we were so blessed. Patty and I know that we would not be the people that we are today if it wasn't for *everything* that God allowed us to go through. God used that situation and many others to mold and fashion us for the job that we have now and for a life eternally, and then on top of it, so many people looked at our son throughout his life and said that it was *he* that gave them the strength, the courage to go forward.

Was it tough? You bet it was! Because of the outcome, we wouldn't change a thing! In just a little over a thousand years our son will be resurrected. He will have the opportunity to live one hundred years in a perfectly healthy body. He will see and he will live a miracle – God will give him an absolutely *awesome* opportunity! In the end, he will have missed out on nothing! Brethren, never blame God for anything that happens in your life; God knows what is best for each and every one of us.

Now, let's pick up the story back in **Exodus 14:13 – And Moses said unto the people, Fear you not, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you today.** In other words, what are you worried about? Don't be afraid. Wait on God. Be patient. See how God is going to work this out for you.

Continuing on... **which, for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.** In other words, be quiet, quit the whining, quit the complaining, let *God* fight your fights, let *God* handle your problems. There is one big difference between you, me, and the Israelites; we have been given God's spirit. We understand that God is working with us, not only on a physical level, but His ultimate goal is to mold and fashion us on a spiritual level.

Let's turn now to **Isaiah 64:8 – But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hands.** Some Red Sea moments God plans, others He just allows. We live in Satan's world and there will be plenty of things that go wrong. God allows those Red Sea moments and He uses them to mold and fashion us. He *is* our Master Potter. He knows what it will take to create His final product in each and every one of us. He also uses those moments as a means of testing us, to see what we're made of, to see if we can withstand the test of time. Our Red Sea moments are what define us. They are also what God uses to *refine* us.

Have you ever seen a potter at work? Many of times when our family has gone to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, we have watched some true artisans at work. The art of making pottery is an interesting process to watch and there is much that we can learn from the process itself. The potter starts off with a hard chunk of clay. At that moment, it is of little to no value. It has no shape, no form, and it definitely doesn't have any beauty. It's just a big grey blob. There is only one thing that that chunk of clay has... and that one thing? It has potential. The potter has vision and he knows *exactly* what it will take to turn that clay into something of great value. When God calls us, when He begins to work with us, we *are* that chunk of clay. At that moment, in that state, we also have little to no value. The only thing that we have, we have potential. Without that potential, we're destined for eternal death, because we are the

epitome of sin. Of and by ourselves we are evil and we are of no value to God. If we do not yield to the molding process this physical existence will be all that we will ever experience.

The first thing that that potter does *before* he begins to mold and shape the clay is he adds a little bit of water; the water begins to soften the clay. It's the only thing that allows the clay to become moldable. Without that water, the clay is useless, and it would be *impossible* to work with.

How *awesome* it is that the first thing that God does is add a little “water” to each and every one of us. That “water” is His holy spirit. God the Father and Jesus Christ actually begin to live *in and through us*. Their indwelling is the only thing that allows us to become pliable. Without God's spirit, without that “water,” there *is* no ability to change or to be formed into something that is truly beautiful. Isn't that something? It's Elohim. It's God's Family! *God* is molding and fashioning us to become Gods in His Family.

After the water is added the clay is still hard and it will take a lot of work before it can be molded into that final product. It also has air pockets or gaps that make it unstable at that moment in time. At the beginning, the clay is not ready to be molded. One of the most important preparations that a potter makes in getting ready to work with clay is to make certain that it is homogenous in stiffness and it has no air pockets.

When I looked up the word “homogenous,” I was amazed at the definition. One of its definitions is, “Of the same or similar kind of nature.” That is *exactly* what God is molding into each and every one of us, the same or similar nature, *His* nature. That's what this whole life is about! That's why we have these Red Sea moments.

In the physical art of making pottery this homogenous process is most often accomplished through what's called “wedging.” Wedging brings clay to the proper consistency so that it can be formed. One of the most popular methods to wedge clay is what's called “the cut and slap method.” The potter cuts the clay in two and then he *slams* a piece of it on to his working surface. He then *slams* the other piece of clay onto the first piece of clay, welding the pieces back together once again. This process begins to remove the air pockets, the gaps in its character, and the imperfections out of the clay. The potter then cuts the material again and repeats this slapping process. Each time the clay is cut and slapped, more and more of the air pockets are removed. With each cut and slap, the clay becomes a little bit more pliable. It takes typically around 20-25 cuts and slaps to make the clay ready, just to prepare it so that it *can* be molded.

When you think about the process that the potter just put the clay through, what did he end up with? After all that, he still just has a blob of clay on his worktable. It took much work to bring that clay to the point of being *able* to be molded.

Since God began working with us, how many times have we been cut to the core? How many times have we been “slapped across the head?” Personally? I think 25 didn't even scratch the surface with me, but that's exactly what happens to each and every one of us. When we see ourselves for what we truly are it cuts deep. When we're “slapped around,” it *can* be painful. But if we yield to the process each and every time, we are like that lump of clay. We become more pliable and we're brought closer to the same or similar kind of nature of God Himself. The amazing part is it takes much work just to get us ready to be molded. How many years does it take of just being prepared, of being cut, of being slapped before God can even begin to mold and fashion us into His final product?

When the clay is finally ready to be molded, the potter begins to carefully push and mold the clay with much pressure. During this process the potter must take care that the clay does not dry out; water is continually added as needed so that it remains pliable. Depending on the final sculpture some clay is removed from areas and additional clay is added in other places. It can be a painstaking process but the potter is patient, the potter maintains his vision, he looks forward to the final product as the sculpture begins to take shape.

As God molds and fashions us it is also necessary throughout the whole process that *He* continually adds “water,” His spirit, to us. Without it, He loses the ability to work with us. It is *so important* that we *never* allow the flow of that spirit to be cut off. It is only through repentance and changes that that flow can continue. If we fail to repent, if we fail to allow the change to take place in us, that flow of God's spirit can and it will cease. Without God's spirit we become un-moldable and return to the state of a useless piece of clay. If we allow God to work in us and with us, through much pressure we begin to take shape. In order for God to achieve His final product in us there are parts of us that need to be removed, and we have a lot of those parts. That removal process *can* be quite painful. There are parts of us that we humanly just *want* to hang onto, but they must be gotten rid of. If we yield God will continue to reveal what those parts are. Those parts are anything that is contrary to God, and with each and every sermon that we hear, and each and every post from Mr. Weinland, we are shown what we need to be getting rid of. That's what the molding process is all about.

And then there are those parts that must be added. When you look at a sculpture it is the intricate details that make it come alive. They are the finishing touches, when God gets to that phase with us, and those are the parts that typically take us out of our comfort zone because that isn't who we are.

Turn to **Matthew 25:14** – says, **For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his own ability; and straightway he took his journey.** Each and every one of us was born with God-given talents. We all have what is called “natural ability,” abilities that God created in us. Some have more, some have less. And with those abilities comes responsibility. God expects us to use whatever He has given us to its fullest measure.

Continuing on in **verse 16** – **Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them another five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained another two.** These two people took what God had given them and they yielded to the molding process. Through much pressure, through many trial and Red Sea moments, opportunities were placed before them and God began adding to their talents, adding the intricate details, and those finishing touches to His final work of art. They yielded to the process and produced additional fruit, additional talents.

Continuing in **verse 18** – **But he that had received one went and dug in the earth and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents saying, Lord, you delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five more talents. And the lord said unto him, Well done, you good and you faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord. He also that had received two talents came before and said, Lord, you delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord also said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord. Then he which**

had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I know that you are a hard man, reaping where you haven't sown and gathering where you haven't strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, you have here what is yours. And he gave him back the one talent.

Throughout my years in God's Church I have also been afraid many of times. Me, personally, I am "the king of introverts," and that's not a good king to be. I was so introverted as a child that I literally cried when my father made me answer the phone. Of and by myself I had no self-confidence either in the Church or out of the Church. If I would not yield to God, if I would not trust and let God mold and fashion me, I would be that person with one talent. It is *much* easier for me *not* to step out, but that isn't what God has called me to.

How about you, brethren? God expects – *God demands* growth! Are you willing to let God mold and fashion you? Are you stepping outside of your comfort zone and yielding to the process, yielding to the opportunities that God is placing before you? If not... continuing on in **verse 26 – And His lord answered and said unto him, You wicked, you slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: You should have at least put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury or interest. Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which has ten talents. God will not accept a lack of growth in any of us!** Once again, God expects – *God demands* growth. We must produce fruit in our lives.

Verse 29 – For unto everyone that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has. And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and there shall be gnashing of teeth.

Once the potter has finished molding his work of art there is one final process in order to complete his work; he fires the piece at extremely high temperatures. This is accomplished in a kiln or an oven. As the kiln is firing up and cooling down, the changes in temperature make some profound changes in the clay; the clay goes from this soft, totally fragile substance to one which is rock hard, impervious to elements in time, the changes nearly mystical in its complete metamorphosis. However, during this firing process, if there are any imperfections, the extreme heat will expose those imperfections and some pieces will be destroyed with explosive effects. After *much* work, they will out of necessity, be discarded.

As scripture has stated, we are God's clay. We *will* be made pliable, we *will* be moulded and fashioned, and in order to finish the process we *will* be subjected to extreme heat. That extreme heat is made manifest in trials and Red Sea moments. Each and every one of us will go through that same process, and that process will bring God to one conclusion, and He will say to everyone that has ever existed, "Now I know you." For some, it will be a great blessing, and they will enter into His Family. For others, when He says, "Now I know you," it will not be a good thing. They will inherit eternal death. Unfortunately, for some that final Red Sea moment, that moment of being subjected to extreme heat, will be their undoing.

Throughout this whole process we have to learn to trust God. As uncomfortable as the process can sometimes be, we must have faith in our Master Potter. God knows everything that's happening in our lives. There are no surprises for Him. God knows what's going to happen in our lives before we have the slightest clue. He doesn't have those, "*Whoa! I didn't see that coming,*" moments. God plans and God allows for *every aspect* of our life. He will not ask more of us than we're able to give.

As we face these Red Sea moments our human side has a tendency to ask questions. Will God provide for me this time? What if He doesn't? *What if... What IF God doesn't* intervene? The "what ifs" thoughts can run rampant! Typically, the concern is more about, what if He doesn't intervene in the way that I want Him to intervene? Our fears, our worries, come from the matter of our seeking our own will and not God's will. There is no room for our will in our lives. I have been there, done that, and I have asked those very questions.

There is one thing that everyone has in common; the Israelites, all of those who have gone before us, Mr. and Mrs. Weinland, me, you, we all live our Red Sea moments. They are not stories when we're living them; they *are* reality. *They are our life!* Most, if not all, are not the choices and directions that we would want to take in our life – we would take the easy route. If it were up to us we would tell our Potter, "I do not want You to mold and fashion me to be a warrior. I don't want to carry all of that spiritual armour. It's heavy. It takes conditioning. It takes effort. It takes endurance. Could you, maybe, just make me into a... maybe a simple vase? Put a couple flowers in me and let me just sit on the shelf?" Life is much easier and simpler hiding in the background.

When we accepted our calling *God* did not give us the choice as to what we wanted to be. The outcome is always the same for everyone that God has and is working with; it is always *His* will. The Israelites would not have chosen the path through the wilderness. Patty and I would not have chosen financial hardships. We definitely wouldn't have chosen a disabled son. Mr. and Mrs. Weinland's first choice would *not* have been for him to go to prison. Who are we to question how God molds and fashions us? It is always God's will, and in the long run, God's will is best for *us* and God's will is best for the entirety of mankind.

There is good news in every Red Sea moment. We have a promise from God. Turn to **Matthew 6:25 – Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Which of you by taking a thought can add one cubit unto your stature? And why take you thought for raiment? ...what you're going to wear. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all things.**

God will *always* provide. He will *never* forsake us. He will *never* turn His back on us. He will *always* provide *if* – there is that big word again – *IF* we put Him first. Where is our primary focus? Are we putting the Kingdom of God first in our lives? Are we letting God mold and fashion us as He sees fit? Brethren, it's good that we have those Red Sea moments in life because in these moments it forces us to continually put our focus back on God. Without those moments we would never be God, we would never come to the point of being prepared for God's Family. We naturally believe that we can do all things and we can figure out what is best for us. We, or should I say "me," becomes the inward focus. Through trial, through adversity, we learn that there is no room for "me." God brings us to the understanding that, "I *cannot* do it. I *need* God. I *need* His direction. I need *His* intervention." The Red Sea moments should cause our attention to shift away from self and redirect our attention to where it

should have been all along – our attention should go back to God. We cry out for intervention and we cry out for His mercy. We. Need. God.

The Red Sea moments are becoming more and more frequent in the lives of God's Church. God *is* allowing them and He is preparing us. He is preparing us for His ultimate purpose, His Family, and He is mercifully preparing us for the events that we will experience in the not-too-distant future. There is a time coming in all of our lives that if we do not have that confidence that God will provide, if we don't have 100% certainty and trust that God is in charge of our lives, we will fall, our hearts will melt with fear as the events of the future unfold before our very eyes.

Fortunately for us, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

For one last scripture turn back to **Exodus 14:13 – And Moses said unto the people, Fear you not, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD which He shall show to you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more. The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore cry you unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward...**

Brethren, whatever Red Sea moment that you are living, listen to your God, trust your God, for He says, "Fear not! Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD," which He *will* show you! God *shall* fight for you! And what is His final admonition? "Go forward..."

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