

**Message: A Defining Moment**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**Exodus 14:10-25**  
**Sermon Series: Shift**  
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It was a watershed moment – the Israelites were being transferred from one location to another and from bondage to freedom. Not only were they moving residence, but they had to shift out of neutral and commit to driving forward. Slavery was all this generation had known. After being granted their release, they anticipated smooth sailing. When Pharaoh reversed his promise to let them go and pursued them with the world’s greatest army, their besetting sin reared its head – fear expressed through grumbling. The Israelites refused to trust God or their leadership. They preferred returning to a dysfunctional relationship instead of seizing an unprecedented opportunity.

The Israelites were asked to make two transitions – an EXIT from the kingdom of darkness and an ENTRANCE into the kingdom of light. Unfortunately, they never made the shift. After their miraculous delivery from Pharaoh, they never learned to trust the deliverer. They chose complaint, criticism and grumbling. They forfeited their entry pass into the Promised Land because of their hard hearts and bitter tongues.

**APPLICATION:** Defining moments can be both corporate and personal. Even the best companies, corporations and organizations must shift and changes. Jesus said, *“No one puts new wine into old wineskins.”* John Wesley knew it was time to change rather than be stuck in neutral, so he shifted to a new movement: Methodism.

What are your defining moments? Was it a change in family or relationships, schools, jobs, health, finances or something else? Were you more afraid to exit the old place or enter the new one? What have been your defining spiritual moments? How have these affected your life? What corporate changes do we need to make, too?

**BACKGROUND:** Moses was never a rugged individualist like the Lone Ranger. No great leader ever acts alone. Think of all the people who worked behind the scenes to save, protect and to advance Moses life & his call from God. His **mother** hid him from those seeking to kill him when he was a baby. She was able to be a “foster” parent for her own son after Pharaoh’s daughter allowed her to keep the baby for a while. She used her influence to teach him Hebrew values when she had an opportunity. His **sister**, Miriam, watched the entire process and when the Egyptian princess fished his boat out of the Nile, Moses was raised in the

prestigious court a **Pharaoh**. He learned so much from that experience! His **father-in-law** gave Moses his daughter to marry, which led to Moses family, and a flock of sheep which led to his business. His **wife, Zipporah**, stood with him through difficult times. Once she even saved his life. His brother **Aaron**, spoke for him because Moses wasn't fluent or confident in his speech. Moses didn't take the people into the promised land. **Joshua** succeeded him and did that. Moses always had help. He was never a one-man band. He had an indispensable role to play for the Israelites, but he never acted alone. Knowing this should help leaders to have humble and grateful hearts. It should also remind followers how much leaders need and depend upon the encouragement & support of those they are trying to lead.

Who has helped you in life? Who are you helping to follow Jesus?

**1<sup>st</sup>** shift as an adult = he **murdered** an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. Moses fled for his life. This was a **DISRUPTIVE moment**. He was SO important in the world's leading nation & he ran off in shame & failure so they can't find him. The Bible is FULL of stories of people who were disrupted and had to shift. All the famous people in the Bible had them – disruptive moments often were the calling card of leadership & influence. Abraham, David, Isaiah, Jonah, Joseph & Mary, the disciples, Saul on the road to Damascus. The key to a disruptive moment is to turn it into a **DEFINING** moment (positive).

**2<sup>nd</sup>** = **burning bush**. God called him into service. Moses was to lead his people to freedom. However, Moses had a failure of nerve from his earlier years. Previously he stepped up to help the slave being beaten & when he helped Jethro's daughters who were being harassed by shepherds while they were trying to draw water from the well. At the burning bush, Moses had 5 excuses not to get involved. He did not want to shift. (Inferiority, Theology, Results, Talents, finally he just begged God to send someone else). God sent his older brother Aaron to help but didn't let Moses off the hook. This is the great "I Am" meeting Moses, the great, "I Am NOT." The fugitive would have to return to the scene of the crime.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** = a series of confrontations with **Pharaoh**, resulting in the 10 plagues & culminated in the death of the firstborn. God spared the death of the 1<sup>st</sup> born of the Hebrews if they smeared the blood of lambs over their doorposts. The Jews celebrated the Passover from then on. It formed the basis of the Lord's Supper. The death of the firstborn was the final straw for Pharaoh. He finally relented to let the Israelites leave Egypt. When they left - God did not take them along the safest route because He knew they might be tempted to return to Egypt from fear, so He took them by way of the wilderness, toward the Red Sea. He took them to a point of no return.

4<sup>th</sup> = the **Exodus**. Pharaoh changed his mind and decided to go after his slaves.

Exodus 14:10-25

*When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they **feared** greatly. And the people of Israel **cried out** to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to **die** in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been **better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.**"*

*<sup>13</sup> And Moses said to the people, "**Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." <sup>15</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? **Tell the people of Israel to go forward.** <sup>16</sup> Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup> And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. <sup>18</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."*

*<sup>19</sup> Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, <sup>20</sup> coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.*

*<sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup> And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

*<sup>23</sup> The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. <sup>24</sup> And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a **panic**, <sup>25</sup> clogging<sup>[b]</sup> their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."*

They forgot 2 things:

1.) how **awful** "the good old days" had been. Who would ever want to return to slavery? They suffered from a lack of imagination. They had no concept of a better future. "You could take the Hebrews out of Egypt but you couldn't take the Egypt out of the Hebrews."

2.) about the **power of God**. Moses' response shows his spiritual growth: *"The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."* 10 plagues had to have developed his faith. 10x. Each time build strength and confidence. He needed to reinforce his faith 10x so it became a new habit.

#### Exodus 14

#### **FEAR NOT**

We should be on the alert, watchful, and aware. However, fear tells lies, distorts, exaggerates & makes everything seem worse than it really is.

#### **stand firm**

Ps 20:8 *"They collapse & fall, but we rise & stand upright."* This was the equivalent of putting it into "Park," maybe with the emergency brake on. There's a time to put it into "park." It's hard to start your car unless it's in park. It's not reverse (there's a time for that, too; but don't drive down the B.A. in reverse).

#### **be silent**

#### **FEAR**

#### **collapse**

**grumble** The Lord hates grumbling, gossip

#### **move forward**

#### **Kingdom of God**

There are 2 ways we can handle this: KOG/KOP. What we're going through now may be new to us, but it's not new to people of the faith.

#### **PROGRESS**

It can be hard to shift into forward because it's often easier to remain in neutral or put it in reverse & go where you've already been. The Hebrews were stuck in neutral. In their fear, they vented at Moses. They went into a panic. So did the Egyptians.

We get the word "**panic**" from a mythical Greek god with the legs/horns of a goat. "**Pan**" = god of isolated rural areas, music, hunting, sexual & spiritual possession. Supposedly, Pan loved to terrorize sheep/goats by frenzied activity. Pan caused herds to flee & charge off a cliff to their deaths. This is how the word, "panic," entered our vocabulary. When panic overtakes us, we are dominated by fear. We lose the ability to be rational and to think clearly. Individuals and entire groups are seized by it. A panic attack can cause stampedes, retreats in battle or a financial collapse. Panic prompted mistakes create regrets. Reasonable people question, evaluate, and take time instead of just having feelings or rushing to judgment. Facts are checked, comments weighed, and motives considered. Listening to wiser and more seasoned voices helps minimize panic. Pan leads to "panic" and it can also lead to the "pandemic" – and result in crazy thinking.

"**Banias**" is a place in northern Israel. It was said the god Pan roamed here. It was also supposed to be the gate to hell. It was also where Jesus asked His

#### **reverse**

#### **Kingdom of Pharaoh**

#### **PANIC**

disciples, “Who do people say I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Jesus commended Peter for his great confession of faith. Peter’s faith is seen in opposition to Pan and panic, and the Kingdom of God in opposition to the gates of hell.

Years ago, the legendary Notre Dame football coach (1918-1930), Knute Rockne, was facing a major football game against USC. USC was a vastly superior team. But Rockne came up with a plan to psych out USC. Today college football teams can have 85-100 on their rosters, but back then they only had a couple dozen. Guys played both ways (both offense/defense). So, Rockne recruited every big kid he could find on campus and gave them a uniform and when it came time to take the field, an army of Fighting Irish appeared out of the dressing room. They had dozens and dozens of them – 100 in total. They just kept coming and coming and coming. The USC team panicked. Their coach reminded them they could only play 11 men at a time, but the psychological damage was done. USC lost. They didn’t lose to the 100 men – they were beaten by their own fear. Fear will do that to us.

Do you feel cornered right now? Are you up against it? Are you in a predicament? Do you feel you are in a cul-de-sac or dead end? Maybe you’re alone and feel scared. Maybe it’s your health. Maybe it’s financial or job related. Maybe it’s a relationship Maybe you feel like the Israelites – trapped against the Red Sea with the Egyptians bearing down on you. It’s a time to have faith, to stand firm and to move forward. There are people who will stand with you. The Lord will fight for you, too. Even when it seems there is no way, there IS a way – that’s by trusting Him.