



My Presence Shall Go With Thee

"And He (God) said, my presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14).

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Life is like a journey where we have to cross rivers, climb mountains, walk the plains and valleys, face varying weather conditions amidst changing moods and other dangers / surprises along the route before eventually arriving at the final destination. Our companion in the journey can make our experiences pleasant or bitter.

Beginning from salvation till we get to heaven the Christian life is in many respects similar to the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. There were many milestones in their deliverance and wilderness journey, which we all can learn from. Some of these are:

- 1) In delivering them from oppressive bondage in Egypt, God demonstrated His victory over the power of despotic Pharaoh. Similarly at salvation God, not only sets the sinner free from sin but, also gives him victory over all the powers of Satan. Israel was happy over their exciting deliverance and sighed for relieve. Every oppression will have an end. No situation is permanent. God has promised and He delights to deliver his children from every bondage. We can always be confident of victory if God is our constant companion.
- 2) Just like in normal life, their joy was no sooner than not punctuated when they found themselves before the Red Sea surrounded by mountains and being hotly pursued by the irate army of Egypt from behind. Miraculously God gave them victory. Thrilled by this they celebrated with singing and dances, but very soon found that before them lay a wide expanse of wilderness. Notwithstanding God led them through by the pillars of cloud in the day, and fire in the night. The same God is our guide. He will lead us safely through the wilderness of this world to our heavenly home.
- 3) Their next challenge was daily provisions for sustenance. God provided all the food, water, healing, victories and indeed all that they

"What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us, who can be against us!" (Romans 8:31)



needed to take them into The Promised Land. What a lesson for us! **(a)** In God's providence, Christians may not be exempted from problems but God identifies with them in every problem and gives them victory. The three Hebrew children were not prevented from being thrown into the fire but God's presence gave them freedom in the fire. Daniel was not stopped from being thrown into the lions' den but God's presence paralysed the lions. Joseph was thrown into prison but God was with him. It is not the problems that come your way that matters as much as who goes with you through the problems; **(b)** So then when you come to the cross road of perplexing problems, and your future appears like a hopeless, barren wilderness, remember that God is over you. Instead of giving up in despair turn to Him; for **"If the Lord be with us who can be against us"** (Romans 8:31); **(c)** Cheer up weary pilgrim! There is victory in every crisis. Silver linings shine on God's side of the cloud. When Jesus is in the boat the storms cannot drown it. A project started by God cannot be wrecked by the devil. When God leads His people out of Egypt He means to take them into the promised land. And they shall eventually get there. **"Fear not little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"** (Luke 12:32).

- 4) Another challenge was the threat of curses from Balaam and Balak, but note the outcome - (a) "... howbeit our **God turned the curse** into a blessing" (Nehemiah 13:2); (b) "Nevertheless **the LORD thy God**

would not hearken unto Balaam; but **the LORD thy God turned the curse** into a blessing unto **thee**, because **the LORD thy God loved thee**" (Deuteronomy 23:5).

There is nothing to fear regarding curses from the wicked when God is with you!

- 5) Another challenge was the danger of doubt, unbelief and faithlessness, which ultimately kept them in the wilderness for 40 years. We need to seriously learn from this lest we unwittingly lengthen our wilderness wanderings. They had arrived at the borders of the Promised Land, probably about a year after leaving Egypt, and God had even instructed them through Moses to Go in at once and possess it; "... **And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged...**". Instead of prompt obedience, they came up with a "Bright Idea" about sending spies to survey the land first (Deuteronomy 1:19-26). Their "Bright Idea" resulted in ten of the twelve spies bringing evil report that discouraged the multitudes, gave rise to murmuring and consequently, divine judgment that kept them in the Wilderness for 40 years till all the adult unbelievers perished (Numbers 13 and 14). This is a good example of God answering people according to the idols in their hearts. **"Therefore speak unto them... Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols"** (Ezekiel 14:4). Note that God was not in a hurry to solve the problem of keeping, feeding, protecting and shepherding them in the wilderness by ignoring their doubt, unbelief and murmurings. The sooner we drop our fears and obey God promptly, the faster we will get to our destination, and inherit divine promises.

- 6) Israel came to another milestone when God

took Moses their well known leader to glory. Obviously many would have despaired of future victory if Moses the experienced and mighty leader is gone. But God is wiser than man, and He was certainly more concerned about Israel getting to the Promised Land than they were themselves. **[a]** In His wisdom He always ensures that the continuity of His work is maintained. He never removes a Moses without providing a Joshua. Before Elijah was taken to heaven Elisha was prepared and endued with a double portion of Elijah's power to continue where he stopped. When Paul "planted" in Corinth and left for other places God sent Apollo to "water" it. When Jesus was physically taken to heaven the Holy Spirit was sent to abide with us for ever. **"What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us, who can be against us!"** (Romans 8:31). **[b]** It is wonderfully glorious when God leads His people, for **"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing"** (Zephaniah 3:17). **[c]** When next you are faced with a perplexing situation remind yourself of the past miracles of God and look up to Him in confidence and faith and He will deliver you. God is nearest when He seems farthest, and you can appropriate His presence when you cannot feel Him. Remember, it is always darkest before dawn. Your miracle is nearer than you may think - so don't ever give up.

- 7) Israel eventually got to the Promised Land. **PRAISE THE LORD ! We shall surely get to heaven if we do not give up in this wilderness. When the going gets tough and fear makes you feel you may never get there, remind yourself of the divine assurance - "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"** (Luke 12:32).

**Have faith in God, the sun will shine
Though dark the cloud, may be today
His heart hath planned, your path and mine
Have faith in God, Have faith always.**