

Why We Should Move When God is On the Move Exodus 13:17-14:22

Good morning, Fil-Am! Welcome to our new location. God is good! I hope you like this place. I heard about this guy who just opened a new business and one of his friends sent him flowers for the occasion. The flowers arrived at the new business site and the owner read the card, “Rest in Peace.” The owner was angry and called the florist to complain. After he had told the florist of the obvious mistake and how angry he was, the florist replied, “Sir, I’m really sorry for the mistake, but rather than getting angry, you should imagine this: somewhere, there is a funeral taking place today, and they have flowers with a note saying, “Congratulations on your new location!” Say to the next person next to you, “Congratulations on your new location!”

New location, new message series. We’re starting a new series this morning called “On the Move”. I was inspired by the song we just heard which basically is saying God is always on the move in our lives. We see it in people who are getting saved, people who are serving, people who are being set free from their weaknesses, pain, emotional problems, people who are fighting their temptations, and people who are fighting for the truth. Somehow, somewhere, God is on the move. If we look around us, God is on the move. In fact, if you look inside yourself, God is on the move as well. He is doing a mighty work in you and in other people’s lives.

In this church, I believe God is on the move as well. I think it is quite obvious. God has moved this church literally. And I believe he has done this because he has a purpose in mind. And I’m so glad that you came this morning. The fact that you’re here tells me you want to become a part and will be a part of God’s latest movement in this church. His purpose will always stand.

The Bible says in Job 42:2, "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted."

Henry Blackaby in his book, "Experiencing God", says that God is always doing something and we must join God in what he is doing. He says, "Watch to see where God is working and join Him in His work." So, I'm really glad you're joining God in his work in this church. But there's a lot more work to be done. We must be sensitive to where God is working and what he is doing so we can do his will.

On the move is an idiom which means moving or travelling from one place to another. It also means very active or busy. That's how we can characterize God. He is travelling from one place to another or so it seems. The Bible says that God can be in multiple places at one time. He is omnipresent. When we say God is on the move, we actually mean he is very active and busy doing something somewhere, sometimes simultaneously. Maybe in our lives, in other people's lives, in different circumstances, in various situations, in different places, at different times. When Jesus was confronted by the Jewish leaders why he healed on the Sabbath, he says, "My Father is always working, and so am I." (John 5:17 NLT)

This morning, some of you are probably experiencing the move of God in your lives. Maybe, he wants you to move from one point to another, maybe physically, maybe emotionally, maybe spiritually, maybe even mentally. For example, there's this bitterness inside of you that's eating you up. As a result, you're feeling anxious and nervous. God wants you to move from bitterness to forgiveness. He wants to release you. Or perhaps, God wants you to be involved more in church but you're feeling afraid and inadequate. But God wants you to trust him so you can move from the sideline to the court. How about a literal move like maybe he wants you to be involved in missions. It can be doing outreach in another part of the world or serving people in your local community.

So, this morning, I'd like to share with you three reasons why you can trust God to follow and obey him as he moves in your life. **Reasons why we should move when God is on the move.** Say to the person next to you, "Are you ready to move?"

Get your pens and outlines and get ready to move those pens. But first, I want you to please get your Bibles and follow along as I read this passage from the Bible. Please turn to Exodus 13 beginning verse 17 through chapter 4 verse 18. This is a long passage but please follow me as I read it because this is one of the most exciting verses in the Bible. (Read the Bible)

The first reason why we should move when God is on the move is

1. Because he knows the way.

This seems obvious because he is God. But, sometimes we think we know more than God. In verse 17, it says, **"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.'"**

God knew that the Israelites would be discouraged when they face obstacles on the way if they took the shorter route. You see, at this point, the Israelites didn't have a strong trained army. For sure, they would scamper away when confronted with the Philistine army. So, God is leading them through a longer route for their own sake.

God knows that our tendency is to take short cuts. We do that because we think we'll reach our destination faster. We think we'll be better off if we don't exert effort. What we don't know is often it makes our trip longer. It makes the situation worse. Then, it discourages us and we retreat.

In life, we take shortcuts because we don't want to put in the required labor. You see, there is no shortcut to anywhere worth going. There is no substitute for doing the work. Einstein once said, "Genius is 1% talent and 99% effort."

You must run to be a runner. You must write to be a writer. You must actively attend to your relationships if you want them to flourish. You cannot say, “I’m giving up on this marriage. I want to be happy again. I’ll leave my spouse.” If you’re having problems in your marriage, work at it. Take the longer route. Go to counseling. Communicate with each other. If you’ve been divorced, make every effort to keep your current marriage strong.

We have to do the godly thing in order for us to reach our destination. And it takes time and effort to do that. Usually, God makes us wait. But he leads us gently and compassionately. He wants to give us the best. If I took the shorter route, I wouldn’t have found the best wife. So, it took a long time and I’m glad I waited on God. (Where is my wife? She left me)

The Bible says, “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” (Psalm 27:14)

You see, God is always on time. We may think he is delayed but he is the one who is actually waiting for us. He waits for us to grow and to learn to trust him. Don’t move ahead of God. Problems arise when we do that. We all know what happened when Abraham and Sarah couldn’t wait for God’s promise to give them a child. Abraham had a child with Sarah’s maidservant Hagar. This child was Ishmael. Later on, Isaac was born through Sarah. Isaac was the ancestor of the Israelites and Ishmael of the Arabs. And since that time the Arabs have been a thorn on the side of Israel.

So, trust in God because he knows the way. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Another reason why you can follow God as he moves is
2. Because he lights the way.

Let me read again Ex. 13:21-22, “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”

God was the light of the Israelites as they travelled. See how the Lord loved his people so much. He guided them every step of the way, night and day. He didn't want them to lose their way. He was so caring and loving of his children. God was always ahead of them and God gave them a visible sign for them to follow.

In our day, what is this visible sign? God's Word. The psalmist says in Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” God's Word will never lead you astray. It is perfect and error-free. 2 Timothy 3:16 (GNT) says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living.”

During the most painful time in America's history, the civil war, the Bible has been the constant companion of Abraham Lincoln. He sought refuge in the Bible. He knew how formidable the challenges he faced and he admitted to not knowing what to do at times. But he turned to the Bible for guidance.

For example, he said to General Dan Sickles, a participant in the Battle of Gettysburg:

“Well, I will tell you how it was. In the pinch of the campaign up there (at Gettysburg) when everybody seemed panic stricken and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went to my room one day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed to Him mightily for victory at Gettysburg. I told Him that this war was His war, and our cause His cause, but we could not stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville... And after that, I don't know how it was, and I cannot explain it,

but soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul. The feeling came that God had taken the whole business into His own hands and that things would go right at Gettysburg and that is why I had no fears about you."

A year after that, upon receiving a gift of a Bible from a group of African-Americans from Baltimore, he said:

"In regards to this great Book [the Bible], I have but to say it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this Book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are found portrayed in it."

Lincoln believed in the Bible so much and he believed that it was God's answer to many of life's problems.

Are you in a tight bind right now? Are your circumstances hard to bear and you're confused? Are you going through so much difficulty, maybe you're not in the best of health, your finances are not enough to pay your bills, your marriage is sinking, your children are astray, your boss is cantankerous, your co-worker is crabby, you get insulted, or just feel the weight of the world on your shoulder, why don't you turn to God's Word? Find comfort in it. Find God's answer for you in it. But you have to open it and dwell on it. It is God's love letter to you. When he led the Israelites by the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, he expressed his great love to them. The Bible is an expression of God's love to you. Open it, read it, and his word of love will flow from it to you. And you will feel the sweetness of his love just like the psalmist who says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)

Years ago, I went to Tokyo, Japan with another Filipino guy for computer training. We stayed in the same hotel and went to the same training center. So, every day we would walk together and sat in the same training room together.

As days went by, I discovered the guy had some kind of attitude that I didn't like to the point that I didn't want to walk with him anymore. But I had no choice. What then should I do? I turned to 1 Corinthians 13 and every night I would read this passage and made it personal. So, instead of "Love is patient, love is kind", I substituted my name, "Rolly is patient, Rolly is kind. Rolly does not envy and so on and so forth." That helped. God's word soothed my aching heart in the morning and so I could walk with him. But in the evening, that bitterness returned and I had to read 1 Cor. 13 all over again. In the end, God prompted me to speak this guy about the situation and he understood and our relationship improved.

Why should we move when God moves? Because he knows the way. He lights the way. And thirdly,

3. Because he makes a way.

Ex. 14:21-22 says, "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left."

We see here a miraculous thing that God did for his people. Prior to this, the Israelites must have felt really helpless and hopeless. In fact, many were complaining why God would free them from slavery in Egypt only to face the inevitability of death in the desert. They had nowhere to go. The Egyptian army was fast moving in for the kill. Then, God caused the pillar of cloud to move from the front of the Israelites to behind them. Thus, it came between them and the Egyptians and that slowed the advance of the Egyptians. And during that time, Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea.

There are times when you may feel helpless and hopeless as well. Like you're at the end of your rope.

Don't give up because it is during those times when God will show himself mighty. He is in control. All you need to do is to wait for his deliverance.

We all have been in situations where we have wondered if there is a way out of our problem. Let me give you the example of Abraham again. He found himself in such a predicament when he took Isaac, his only son up to the mountain to sacrifice him before God. Yet, just in the nick of time God provided a solution. The Bible says in Gen. 22:9-14, (Please turn to your Bibles) "When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven. 'Abraham! Abraham! Here I am, he replied; do not lay a hand on the boy, he said. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son. Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord will provide.'"

The Lord always provides. The Psalmist says, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." (Psalm 37:25)

And the Lord Jesus reminds us to not worry. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:25-26)

Just before Moses parted the sea, the people were very afraid. They started to complain. They were saying things like. “What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” Sometimes, that’s our natural reaction when things seem to be not working out. I hope we won’t be like them. I hope we won’t say, “Why did we move? There’s so much people here. It’s so confusing. There’s not enough parking. I have to walk far. The schedule is too tight. Bring us back to the school!” God didn’t promise us a perfect move. But he promised that he will always be with us. Amen?

So, in the midst of all that complaining, Moses said, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Ex. 14:13-14) That’s what the Lord wants you to do today. If you’re restless and afraid, be still. The Lord is fighting your battle. But the next verse is interesting. After Moses says “Be still”, God tells Moses, “Tell the Israelites to move on”. (Ex. 14:15) Be still and move on.

What God is saying is that, first you have to trust God, quiet your soul, believe in what he can do. Don’t be rushing here and there or even think of retreating. Then, you have to keep on moving. Go forward because God is making a way. Just trust and obey for there’s no other way.

God always makes a way where there seems to be no way. The prophet Isaiah makes this point clear to his fellow Israelites in the book he wrote. He prophesies about the coming judgment of God upon the nation of Israel by sending them into exile to Babylon. While in exile, they will find themselves totally helpless under the hands of a foreign power. It’s as if there is no way out of that oppressive nation.

But in the midst of this, Isaiah reminds them of God’s compassion for them and his plan to come through for them. He says in Isaiah 43:16-19: “This is what the Lord says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: ‘Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.’”

Let me share this story with you from the Our Daily Bread devotional: Rebecca was at her lowest as she drove her aging car to the day-care center to pick up her daughter. Her boss was making life difficult again. The landlord was raising the rent. And as a single mom, she felt all alone. “I’m trying my best,” she told God. “Please help me.”

Just then these words by Don Moen came on the radio in a song:
God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way;
He works in ways we cannot see,
He will make a way for me.

“Please do that for me, God,” Rebecca pleaded. “I can’t go any further.”

And God made a way for Rebecca. A better job she had applied for months earlier suddenly opened up. The increase in her income would cover the rent. Then a family in her church made a newer car available to her.

Friend, if life seems to be closing in on you, don’t despair! Trust God. He has promised to make a way.

And this afternoon, God is telling you, “Do you feel alone and helpless? Do you feel like an exile, like there’s no way out of your situation? I will make a way for you. I will come through for you. Forget what happened in the past.

Leave all your worries behind. I'm creating something new. I'm making a way for you and this is where you should go. And you will find healing for your soul and spirit."

Let us all stand as we sing "God will make a way".