



WORKTALK WEEKLY

21 JUNE 2010

Welcome to WORKTALKweekly

In Between Times 7: Caught

Between a rock and a hard place

Some 'in between times' are moments which have the appearance of being acute or a crisis, but have, in fact, been building for a long time. There are numerous phrases in English we use to describe such moments. 'Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea' is believed to have its roots in the British navy or maritime metaphors. 'Between a rock and a hard place' comes out of North American mining culture. They point to a time when to go forwards or backwards seems impossible. You can reach this moment financially, when any course of action leads to large losses or failure. You can reach it strategically, when to cancel a project is as disastrous as finishing it. You will know, in your own experience, these seemingly unsolvable dilemmas.

One of my favourite fictional stories concerns a chess master looking at the picture of Faust, playing chess with the devil for his soul. The chess master sees in the picture a move which will avert what appears to be inevitable defeat, due to the devil's apparent next move check mate.

It was no fiction, however, for a vast group of Israelite travellers a few thousand years ago.

On their way out of Egypt, they find themselves camped by the shores of the sea. Looking up and back, they saw a vast army of Egyptians marching, and on chariots, intent on their destruction or recapture. So ahead lies the sea and behind an army. This is a startling 'in between time' which, although experienced as a crisis, has, in fact, been building as the Israelites had been longing, and their leader has been negotiating, for their release.

To understand this 'in between moment', you will need to see it from two angles - namely seeing and not seeing. The Israelites and the Egyptians could not see what God was doing, so one group went to war and another to terror. One went to rage and the other to complaining. One went to aggression, the other to panic. Moses, on the other hand, can see, albeit not the whole picture, but enough for him to be confident of a good outcome.

What follows is a hierarchy of instructions. Moses gives to the Israelites three instructions. First: 'do not be afraid'. Second: 'stand firm', third: 'be still'. When they do that, he tells them 'you will see the deliverance of the Lord', 'you won't see the Egyptians again', and 'the Lord will fight for you'.

Moses, who is caught in between the Egyptians and the sea, is also in between God and the Israelites. So having given his people their instructions, he gets his. He, too, has three instructions. 'Stop crying out to God': 'tell the Israelites to move on': 'raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the water'.

What follows is the famous crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of an army. The verdict was that the people saw the power of God, feared the Lord, and put trust in Him and Moses. As for Moses, he led a spontaneous music festival, joined by large female choir.

The telling of the story will stimulate you to all kinds of learning but here are a few thoughts for the week. This type of 'in between time' provokes strong emotions and feelings. Rage, aggression, fear, panic, complaining, and terror were present in huge volumes. Much of this

energy was due to confusion and an inability to see.

Leaving aside the troubling fate of the army for another time, it is clear that, for the Israelite people, they could do absolutely nothing to fix this situation. They had to stand still, stand firm and be quiet. They had to stop panicking, stop complaining, stop everything and watch.

These types of 'in between times' have no human solution. For some of you, you are in this time personally. For others, you know your company is in such a time. It seems whole countries may in such times at the time of writing. The temptation to fear, panic, and complain is enormous. Of course we don't call it that, we call it preaching, prophesying and calling to faith, but, if we are honest, many of us are just plain scared.

It takes a great deal of courage to be still and let God do something that none of us thought of. The parting of the Red Sea remains, literally and metaphorically, the quintessential description of the unexpected solution.

I don't know what your dilemma is and I certainly have no idea what the solution is. Maybe, if you can stand still and be quiet for long enough, you will see the deliverance which no one can engineer. For a very, very few the job will involve raising the staff and stretching out a hand. Either way, the call is to trust and, of course, when the waters do part, you have to walk through, however weird that seems.

The Chessmaster will turn up.

Dedication

This WorktalkWeekly is dedicated to Dr. Ron Rowe - a faithful man with much behind him and much in front as he moves to other journeys in the promised land of retirement.

So in between now and the next WORKTALKweekly, do feel free to email us your thoughts to wtw@worktalk.gs or leave a comment on our [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) profile.

Work well
Geoff Shattock

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BIBLE SECTION

Exodus 14, 10-16;31

10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. 11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 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!" 13 Moses answered the people, "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. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." 15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. 17 I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

31 And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Exodus 15, 1a

1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD;

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