



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

Better to Serve the Egyptians?

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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? 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." – Exodus 14:11–12, ESV

In the comfort of our 20-20 hindsight, we read this and criticize Israel's weak faith. Recently rescued from 430 years of slavery (Ex. 12:40–41) where they were victims of cruel and demanding taskmasters (Ex. 1:8–14; 5:5–21), they had seen God's power—and care—in wonders they never would have imagined (Ex. 3:20; 4:21; 6:1). Completely beaten, Egypt not only let them leave, they helped them pack. The text says they "were *urgent* with the people to send them out of the land in haste" (Ex. 12:33, 36). Yet, having just received their freedom, the Israelites were accusing Moses of leading them to their deaths and saying they would have rather stayed in Egypt (Ex. 14:11–12). Amazing!

Before we too quickly declare that we would *certainly* have done better, think about what it must have been like to walk in their sandals. In front of them was the vast Red Sea; bearing down on them was the powerful Egyptian army, with "six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt" (Ex. 14:7). Pharaoh had changed his mind. Cheap slave labor had just walked away; they couldn't afford to just let them go.

So, with the immovable Red Sea in front of them and the irresistible force of the powerful Egyptian army behind, "Israel . . . feared greatly" (Ex. 14:10). They had been promised freedom, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5), release from a life that had offered no hope. But they hadn't bargained for the challenge, uncertainty, and discomfort their new life would entail. If this was how it was going to be—well, maybe life in Egypt wasn't so bad after all.

Those Israelites are long since dead. But the challenge they faced isn't. It's our challenge, too—every time we seriously think about what it might mean for God to move us forward; grow us; *change* us from the enslaved people we once were to the glorious people we hope to be.

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