

God Remembers: A Child is Born

Exodus 2:1-10

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Now would you take your copies of the Scriptures in your hands please and turn with me to the book of Exodus, chapter 2? Exodus chapter 2; if you're using one of our church Bibles you'll find it on page 45. We're going to be thinking about the first ten verses of chapter 2 together. Before we read the Scriptures, let's bow our heads as we pray.

O sovereign God, we bow down before You and we ask as we've opened the Scriptures and as we open their meaning together that You would also open our hearts and our understanding by the secret ministry of the Holy Spirit. Send Him to us, exclude distraction, quicken faith, and move us to submit to the truth. Slay sin and cause spiritual graces to fructify in all our hearts. Work now, we pray, by Your Word, drawing us again to the foot of the cross, there to cling not to our own works but only to the work of another, God's deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Exodus chapter 2, the first ten verses. This is the Word of Almighty God:

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the children grew older, she brought him

to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Amen, and we give thanks to God that He has spoken to us in His holy and inerrant Word.

The Sobering Saga of the Hebrew People

If you were with us last time you will remember, as we began our studies in the book of Exodus looking at chapter 1, that the people of Israel have come to live in Egypt where they have prospered and multiplied. A new Pharaoh, however, has arisen, and he sees this large and growing alien population within his own borders as a threat to national security. He's afraid, he tells us in verse 10 of chapter 1, that they will rebel, join forces with Egypt's enemies, and escape from the land. And so he subjugates them, he forces them into backbreaking manual labor. He enslaves them. And yet, verse 12 of chapter 1, "the more they are oppressed, the more they multiply." And so Pharaoh goes to "Plan B" and devises another strategy, a final solution if you like. He will have the male children of an entire generation killed, ensuring the eventual end of the Hebrews as a people. His fatal mistake, however, was in commissioning Hebrew midwives to carry out the deed. Because they feared God rather than men, they disobeyed Pharaoh, kept the Hebrew boys alive, and the Lord blessed them in turn with families and so the Hebrews continued to increase. And so the edict to put to death a generation of Hebrew boys went from the midwives to the entire Egyptian population. They were to throw the Hebrew babies into the Nile - verse 22. That's chapter 1. It is, if you like, almost like a general news broadcast giving us an update on the entire situation, much like we might see on CNN or FOX News today - broad, brushstrokes sketch of the political and social crisis.

But here in chapter 2 verses 1 through 10, our passage this morning, we're zooming in. To stay with the news analogy this is, if you like, a human interest story following the fortunes of one particular Hebrew family as they live in the middle of this awful crisis. Imagine the reporter coming to us live from the Hebrew ghetto in the land of Goshen, the cameras following him into the rude slum-house that belonged to Moses' parents. Numbers 26:59 tells us they were named Amram and Jochebed. And there we see this little family and they have just received back, from death as it were, their child, while all around them there's the sound of wailing and mourning as neighbors and family members and friends struggle to come to terms with the brutality that has taken from them their firstborn sons. It's a story full of pathos and deep emotion, heartbreaking and raw.

And while our hearts should be stirred by the scene before us, we mustn't miss the lessons that God seeks to teach us in it nevertheless about Himself and about the Gospel of grace. Let me highlight three lessons for you in particular.

First I want us to see what's right there on the surface of the text, the faith of this covenant family. We've just celebrated Christian baptism and we've beheld something of covenant families and their faith already and there is much to learn here about the faith of this one particular covenant family. And then secondly, the laughter of our sovereign God. Our text is dripping with ironies and the joke is all on Pharaoh. The laughter of our sovereign God. And then thirdly, the hints of a coming Savior. The chapter is equally littered with hints and intimations regarding Moses' final destiny, who he is going to be - the deliverer of Israel and beyond him, we are being pointed to the true and final deliverer of all of God's people, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Faith of this Covenant Family

Let's think first of all then about the faith of this covenant family. Knowing they could not kill their own son nor give him up to be killed by their Egyptian overlords, Moses' parents protect him as long as they can. Three months will pass, verse 2, before they're unable any longer to protect their child. And maybe it was his cries that could no longer be hidden, perhaps it was because Moses' mother could not stray too far from the house, that suspicion began to be aroused. Whatever the reason, they could no longer conceal their child, and so unwilling to submit to the wicked edicts of Pharaoh, because they fear God rather than men just like the Hebrew midwives in chapter 1 verse 17, they do everything they can to protect their child. Hebrews 11:23 gives us a good commentary on these moments in this family's life. Hebrews 11:23, "By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that he was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict." That tells us three things about Amram and Jochebed and this family. First it tells us it was faith in the promises of God that underpinned their actions, in everything they do, in all their disobedience of Pharaoh; faith in the promises of God is what drives them. By faith, Moses was hidden. Secondly, Hebrews 11:23 tells us that it was something about Moses himself that lent particular strength that garrisoned that faith. Hebrews 11:23 says "they saw that he was beautiful." Exodus 2 and verse 2 says that "his mother saw he was a fine child." That's a loose English translation. Actually, the construction down to the precise language that's used there is the same Hebrew language used in Genesis chapter 1 regarding the days of creation. "God saw that it was good." There's something about Moses that seems to indicate the divine approbation and approval and favor that rests upon this child, that strengthens their parents' faith. Matthew Henry even suggests that the beauty of Moses here was a precursor of the glory that would later shine from his face at Mount Sinai. Whether that's true or not, Amram and Jochebed trust God's promise and find in their son something to garrison and bolster that faith. And then the third thing Hebrews 11:23 tells us about this moment in this family's life is that this faith enabled them to expel the fear of Pharaoh's decree from their hearts. "By faith, they hid Moses for three months because they saw he was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict." It

was compliance with the will and word of God that informed their actions, the wicked commands of a tyrannical, earthly monarch notwithstanding. They were made bold to obey God because they believed His promises and they feared God rather than men.

Faithfulness at the Risk of Death

And so this heroic faith of theirs protects their son for three months, but compulsion eventually drives them to make another arrangement. They cannot hide their child anymore. They make a simple basket, coat it in tar to make it water-tight, place their son within it, and leave him among the reeds of the banks of the Nile River. In this way actually they find an ingenious mechanism for obeying the strict letter of Pharaoh's edict, don't they? The argument might be made perhaps this was their thinking that they did in fact throw their child into the Nile. The command said nothing about providing him with a life raft. What they were not counting on was what happened next. Miriam, Moses' big sister, is hiding among the reeds keeping watch on Moses. Did she think, perhaps, that he could be kept safe there rather than at home? Whatever the case, you can imagine the knot in her stomach and the pounding of her heart now in her throat as Pharaoh's daughter, of all people, Pharaoh's daughter is the one who comes down to the Nile to bathe. And she hears the child crying and she opens the basket and she sees the baby. This is it! It's all over!

What are the first words that Pharaoh's daughter says? Verse 6, "This is one of the Hebrew children." Now how does she know that? Well given the king's command to throw the Hebrew babies in the Nile it's a logical enough deduction I suppose. The clincher, however, would have been the simple fact that the Hebrew children, Hebrew boys, were circumcised in infancy, whereas Egyptian males were not circumcised until puberty. This is unarguably and self-evidently a Hebrew baby. Now understand what that means. You see what it's telling us about the awful circumstances and the courageous faith of Amram and Jochebed. Circumcision, as you will know, is the sign of God's covenant promises given to Abraham and to his children's children. It's the Old Testament badge of belonging to the people of God, the pledge of the covenant of grace, the seal of salvation's benefits promised in the Gospel. But to put that mark on the flesh of their child at this time, well surely that would have been to identify him for all who saw as a Hebrew child, and therefore to sign his death warrant. Surely God would have understood that if under these extreme circumstances, just this one time, given the dangers, if Amram and Jochebed had disobeyed and not placed the sign of the covenant on their child. But no, Amram and Jochebed, seeing the horrors enacted all around them as Hebrew infants are being slaughtered, nevertheless place their confidence in the unshakable trustworthiness of the promises of God and they obey Him and place the sign of the covenant upon their child. They entrust him to the care of Abba Father who orders all things according to the counsel of His own will.

A New Covenant Parallel

Today, we've administered as you saw, the new covenant equivalent of the sign of circumcision, the waters of Christian baptism. It too is the visible badge of belonging to the church and the people of God. It is the emblem of God's promise to save all who put their faith in Jesus Christ. Like circumcision, baptism is the "sign and seal of the righteousness of faith" - Romans 4 and verse 11. And here in Exodus chapter 2, having brought your child for baptism, we have, I think, a word of exhortation that we can learn from these covenant parents for all of us as covenant parents. As you bring your child, or having brought your child perhaps, many, many years ago even, to the waters of Christian baptism and having placed upon them the sign of belonging to the covenant people of God, you are acting in faith. And your faith does not rest in the sign in the waters. In fact, in Moses' case the sign was something that might have undermined faith; it would have been an indication this is a Hebrew child. It placed him in danger. No, no, they did not put their faith in the sign but they trusted the God who made the promise to which the sign pointed them. They looked to God that He might supply the realities signified, that He would be a God to their child and to their children's children. And that is to be the same for us. All they could depend on in that moment as their child is laid among the reeds and rushes of the banks of the Nile was the mercy and grace and covenant faithfulness of the God who had called and saved them.

A Call to Trust and Rest

And that's true for every one of us as Christian parents. That's all, ultimately, we must rest our faith upon - the promise and faithfulness and reliability of the God of grace. I have observed, if you'll allow me to put it this way - I don't like to use these words really from the pulpit but I hope they'll be helpful here - I have observed that many of us are glad-hearted Calvinists when it comes to ourselves and our own salvation. Praise God that you are. A glad-hearted Calvinist - you look at your own heart and if you're like me, you see nothing to encourage you or to make you believe that within yourself you have the resources to secure salvation. There's no way you ever would have believed the Gospel of grace apart from God's intervention. You know that and you rejoice in that precious truth. It was all God from first to last. He called you and drew you by the Gospel. He gave you new birth and generated faith within you to rest on Christ. He saved you and you believe it and rest in it and praise God for it. And then when it comes to Junior, everything changes. Calvinism goes out the window and you are the worst kind of Armenian - filled with fear, worried about your child, no longer trusting the promises of God but looking for the silver bullet, looking for the mechanism, the form of words, the parenting strategy that will guarantee that you can make your child a Christian. It's an illusion. Salvation belongs to the Lord not the right parenting strategy. By grace are you saved through faith, not of works - not your works as a parent, not your child's work. By grace are you saved through faith and that's not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. He must do it. He

must save. He is to be the object of your faith, parents. Are you parenting from fear or are you parenting from faith in the unshakable promises and utter reliability of the God who keeps covenant and is pleased to save? That's how Amram and Jochebed did it. They fought off fear of Pharaoh's edict by faith in the promises of God. They put God's covenant first. They obeyed God rather than men. And in their case, wonderfully, notice right in the teeth of apparent disaster, the Lord graciously provided for their son's deliverance.

II. The Laughter of a Sovereign God

Pharaoh's daughter disobeys her father. Here's an irony. Pharaoh's daughter - she joins the Hebrew midwives from chapter 1 verse 17 in disobeying the king for the sake of the people of God and she adopts Moses as her own son. Isn't that an irony? That brings me to the second point - the laughter of a sovereign God. The passage is dripping with irony. We saw some of it already in chapter 1. The more the Hebrews are oppressed, the more Pharaoh tries to stamp them out, the more they multiply. The Hebrew midwives, they spare the Hebrew boys. When they're called to account for it they answer truthfully but with a thinly veiled insult, "Hebrew women are much more vigorous than the Egyptians." And they get away with it too. In fact, God blesses them and they also prosper, have families of their own, and so the Hebrews multiply still further. And now here the joke continues. It's a joke all on Pharaoh of course. It is now Pharaoh's daughter who finds Moses, decides to adopt him as her own son. The object of Pharaoh's wrath now becomes a member of his own household! God is making Pharaoh a laughingstock while He claims absolute power over life and death. No, no, the grand issues of life and death are in the hands of a sovereign God alone.

Moses' mother, at the smart thinking of Miriam his big sister is, in God's grace, now Moses' nursemaid. And she's getting paid to do the thing he heart delights to do - to raise her own son. And all the while, unbeknownst to Pharaoh, the foundations for the realization of Pharaoh's own greatest fear are being carefully laid right here. Chapter 1 verse 10 - remember what Pharaoh is so afraid of? That the Hebrews will escape the land. Here's the irony, delicious, God-exalting - the malice and wicked schemes of this evil tyrant are the means by which and provide the circumstances according to which Moses would be preserved and trained and raised up to become the man that he needed to be to be the deliverer of Israel from the clutches of wicked Pharaoh. His own evil schemes become the instrument God uses to defeat his evil schemes. And to crown it all, we have a hint of Moses' destiny - we'll come back to this again - in the name given to him by the princess. His name, Moses, sounds like the Hebrew verb, "to draw out," because, verse 10, she said, "I have drawn him out of the waters." Moses is going to be the one who will draw Israel out from captivity and slavery and bondage. God is sovereign. Three words. Do you ever tire of hearing them, believer in Jesus? God is sovereign! A solid Rock on which to stand. A place to rest your faith no matter the darkness of the times. God is sovereign! Hallelujah!

Praise the Lord! What comfort there is in those three words - God is sovereign.

An Echo of Psalm 2

Not only will evil fail to thwart His plan, as our passage reminds us, God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, even evil. "What you intended for evil" - remember Joseph's words to his brothers at the end of Genesis? They sold him into slavery. "What you intended for evil, God intended for good." Not only does evil fail to thwart His plan, God can take evil and make it serve and further His plan. What are you afraid of? Fight fear with faith in the promises of God and in the absolute sovereignty of God who is able to keep His promises. Exodus 2 is Psalm 2, isn't it, in narrative form. Remember, Psalm 2, just like Pharaoh, "The kings of the earth set counsel and the rulers take counsel together, set themselves and take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed saying, 'Let us break their bonds and cast their cords from us.' But the one who sits enthroned in heaven laughs." In the end, the rage of the nations is preposterous. It is ridiculous because the one who sits on the throne is the sovereign God and all our striving is puny and feeble and ultimately futile. Let faith in the sovereignty of God replace your fears with the joy of knowing that God is going to bring an end to evil and rebellion and more than that, He's going to show it up for what it really is - foolishness, laughable and preposterous, the ant shaking its fist at the elephant. God is here making a laughingstock of Pharaoh and He makes a laughingstock of Satan and sin and He will make a laughingstock of all who side with them. "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense but trust Him for His grace. Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face." "The one enthroned in heaven laughs and says, "I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." The Lord reigns.

III. The Hints of a Coming Savior

The faith of a covenant family, the laughter of a sovereign God, and then thirdly and briefly, the hints of a coming Savior. We've mentioned some of them already so let me simply list them here by way of review. First, we saw how Moses' mother saw that her child was "tov"; that's the Hebrew word, "good." She saw that he was good. The words echo the benediction over creation. "God saw that it was good." This is a child of destiny; a child of moment. Secondly, the word for the basket into which Moses was placed is only used one other time in the Hebrew Scriptures. It's used for another great deliverer and another great deliverance. It's used for the ark. It's the same word. It's an ark that Moses is placed into. Moses, like Noah, will be the savior of his people. He will deliver them from the wrath of God. Pharaoh's daughter, thirdly, pays Moses' mother to nurse her own son. That would have appealed to the Israelite sense of humor I'm sure; not just for the irony of it but because it anticipated the story of Israel itself when it was saved from bondage. You remember what happened at the Exodus. As they are finally set free from slavery, the Egyptians pay them, they pour their

riches, they lavish their riches upon them. And finally, Moses' name, "to draw out," that is his destiny; that's what he's for. He's going to draw out the people from their slavery. The clues all point to Moses' story as a kind of preview of Israel's destiny. Put it all together - slave in Egypt, saved through the water, plunders the Egyptians, makes a laughing stock of Pharaoh, and as we'll see next week he goes on to spend forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. This is Israel's story in miniature, played out in advance in the life of this one man.

A Greater Deliverer to Come

It's a preview of what God is going to do in the lives of His people which teaches us an important Gospel principle. It's this. God's savior, His appointed deliverer, is the representative of His people. His destiny is the precursor of theirs. He is the author and pioneer of their faith. Where he goes that way, their path will lead. And in this, of course, Moses is a type, a pointer, a foreshadowing, a hint of the true and final Savior who was yet to come, our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus acts for us, and because He does, His story becomes our story. He obeyed for us, He died for us, He rose in victory for us, He ascended to glory for us, and He will come to bring us home that where He is we may be also. Jesus' life tracks our destiny. Moses was the deliverer of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptian slavery, saved here in our story from the slaughter of the children. Jesus, similarly saved from the slaughter of infants at the hands of Herod, will be not simply a national deliverer of one people group from sociopolitical bondage; He will be a Savior to all people everywhere and to any who will place their faith in Him. Moses points us to Jesus and Amram and Jochebed show us how we're supposed to respond. The thing that identifies them above everything else as belonging to the people of God is their faith in God's covenant promises, their faith in God's unshakable sovereignty, and ultimately their faith in God's deliverer. That is how we are to be identified. If you are a Christian, do you trust in Jesus Christ? Whatever rituals you perform, whatever externals may be important, even Biblically commanded, they cannot deliver you! You need a Deliverer! You need Jesus! Do you rest on Christ, the greater than Moses to whom Moses points us? It's Him you need.

A Call to Trust in the Greater Deliverer: Jesus Christ

So Amram and Jochebed here, don't they remind us that we need to live and we need to parent by faith? The ironies with which our text is littered reminds us our faith has a secure anchorage in the absolute sovereignty of God who will reduce the worst malice of evil to a laughingstock before His perfect victory. And the whole trajectory, the whole ark of Moses' life shows us that faith's final object is in God's Deliverer, Jesus Christ. I wonder if today you are resting on Him, trusting Him for yourself, for your household. Is Christ your Deliverer? May the Lord bless to us the ministry of His Word. Let's pray together.

O our Father, how we give thanks to You that You have provided a Savior in

Jesus Christ. We ask You that You would be pleased to draw us to trust Him who has drawn out of slavery, the slavery of bondage to sin and death and hell, a people for Himself from every tribe and language and nation. Help us to parent from faith and to live in faith in Your sovereignty and to do so always resting on Christ, whose own story tracks our destiny. For we ask this in His name, amen.

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