

The Deliverer Delivered (by Women)!

Exodus 2:1-10

By [Dr. J. Ligon Duncan](#)

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If you have your Bibles, I would invite you to turn with me to Exodus 2. You will remember from our study of the last two or three weeks that Pharaoh, in his desire to bring the children of Israel under control, and to make sure that they do not become a threat to join with the anti-Egyptians as allies to conquer the land, has attempted several different plans or plots to make sure that Israel is suppressed. He may have genuinely only desired to suppress Israel. However, as the tool of Satan, he is in fact engaged in a war of genocide against Israel. Satan desires to snuff Israel out. Three plans, three plots. We saw first excruciating labor. He put Israel to the test in causing them to do backbreaking manual labor. When that failed its purpose and the children of Israel multiplied even more quickly. He then fell back to a second plan wherein he contacted the Hebrew midwives, and he asked them to put to death the male children. When that plan failed, he announced a plan whereby everyone in Egypt, everyone, those who were Israelites, those were Egyptians, everyone in Egypt was required to put to death all the male children by drowning, and all the daughters of Israel were to be allowed to live. And so that third and final plan of genocide is in place and that is the context into which we come to this story of the birth of a very special boy. So bearing that in mind, let's hear God's word here in Exodus, Chapter 2:

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi and the woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was beautiful (literally that he was good) she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile, and his sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold the boy was crying, and she had pity on him and said this is one of the Hebrew's children. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take

this child away and nurse him for me, and I shall give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son, and she named him Moses and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Amen, and thus ends this reading of God's holy and inspired word. May He add His blessing to it. Let's pray.

Our Lord, this is Your word. We pray that You would speak to our hearts tonight. We pray that You would not only thrill us with the glory of Your providence as it's revealed in this passage, and that you would not only instruct us in Your dealings with Israel, but that You would speak to us right now of the difficult providences that we are having to endure of the inscrutable trials which we are facing. And help us, O God, to trust in You, to believe in both Your goodness and sovereignty. This we ask as Your people, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now as we said when we left our story the last time, Pharaoh had just commanded that all in Egypt must cast all the sons of Israel into the Nile to die in the waters. And we need to feel the force of this in order to appreciate the power of the story that we are about to review. This is no fairy tale. This is cold, hard history. Even the liberals who studied this passage and want to take it apart and claim that it's a myth admit that it is written as if it were a fact. And fictional history, by the way, any literature scholar can tell you, is a completely modern invention. At any rate, this kind of activity is not unusual activity in the course of the history of the world. Tyrants and totalitarian governments are always desirous of controlling even the birth processes in their people. This kind of activity has been going on in the Balkans until very recently. The Pol Pot regime in Cambodia practiced this kind of brutality, and today in China this very kind of thing is going on. Just a few weeks ago on August 24th of this year, the "Times," the "London Times," not a tabloid newspaper, but the "London Times" reported this. "China has been shaken by one of the most horrifying cases of official infanticide in recent memory, after family planners drowned a healthy baby in front of its parents. The actions of the officials in the village of Kideon in the central Hubay Province carried out as a part of China's one child policy caused a public outcry which forced the Hubay government to pledge that those responsible would be punished. A rarity in such cases. The baby's mother, identified by Chinese newspapers as a Mrs. Lu, was expecting her fourth child. Couples in the countryside were seventy percent of China's people live, often have more than one child without punishment despite the one-child policy. But in Mrs. Lu's case, she was forcibly injected with a saline solution to induce labor and kill the child. However, the baby was born healthy to the surprise of the family planning officials, who had ordered the injection, which ordinarily destroys an infant's nervous system. Immediately after the birth, they ordered the father to kill the child outside the hospital. He refused to obey, but was so scared of further punishment that he left the crying baby behind in an office building where it was found by a doctor shortly afterwards. The doctor took the baby back to the

hospital, reunited it with its mother, and he removed the umbilical cord, administered vaccinations and sent the family home. Five officials were waiting for them in their living room. During an ensuing argument, the officials grabbed the baby, dragged it out of the house and drowned it in a paddy field in front of its parents." Predictably the Chinese government has denied this. They have said this is not true. They merely carried out a forced sterilization. I don't particularly care which is the case. Totalitarian governments like to control even the birth processes of their people.

This is a real story that we are facing. This is the situation facing the children of Israel. Every male child by Egyptian law, every male child of the children of Israel is to be drowned. Now into this situation, we see the silent and ironic hand of God come in intervention. As God, in His providence, prepares to save His people in a most unlikely way. If your people faced extermination by the execution of infant boys, how would you come to rescue them? God's plan was to send an infant boy into the world. A child is born, and he is, ironically, cast into the Nile in technical accordance with the command of Pharaoh, but all the while under God's watchful providence.

I'd like you to see three sections to this passage we're looking at tonight. It's really a unified whole, but this will perhaps help us break down some of the interesting points that Moses wants to make.

I. God prepares to save His people through the birth of a baby boy.

In verses 1 through 4 we see the first section of the story where God prepares to save His people by the birth of a little boy whose parents, because of the situation in which this child is born, actually end up having to put the boy in the waters of the Nile but protected by an ark and by his sister. Pharaoh wants to destroy all the sons of Israel in order to assume and to assure his control. What's God's response? The birth of a boy. In the midst of this scene of severe persecution, a nameless child is born to two parents, both of whom are descended from the house of Levi.

Now remember, the children of Israel who would be reading this story or having this story read to them for the first time already know that the house of Levi has been chosen and appointed by God at Sinai to be the priesthood of Israel. So when they hear that a little boy is born whose parents are of the house of Levi, they immediately know that God is setting this boy apart for some special religious service. And the child, we are told in verse 2, was beautiful. Now this is not just a doting mother who thinks that this child is the most beautiful child that was ever born. I suspect that there are probably a good seven or eight hundred most beautiful children ever born somewhere in the vicinity of First Presbyterian Church. Technically, what this woman said over her child is this. She sees the son, and she says, he is good.

Now this is not a statement that he is not affected by original sin. Oh, that that were the case with our children. This is a statement which parallels some statements that we ran into in Genesis 1 where over and over God said, "And it was good, and it was good, and He saw that it was good." What we are seeing here is Moses connect God's redeeming work of Israel with His work of creation, so that God's redemption is seen as a new creation, and so that Moses is seen as the one who will be God's instrument in that new creation. Now the parents of Moses, this unnamed child as yet, defy Pharaoh's dictate. He has commanded everyone in Egypt to put all Hebrew males to death. And they hide the child for three months. Hebrews 11:23 makes it very clear that this was an act of faith on their part.

In verse 2 and in verse 3 we learn that finally when the child has come to a stage where he is difficult to hide, perhaps because of his crying and such, his mother technically complies with Pharaoh's demand, but with a little twist. Remember the Hebrew's children were to be thrown into the Nile. Well, she threw him in the Nile. She just put him in an ark before she threw him in the Nile. And note, however, that as he is placed in this wicker basket, the same term is used for this basket as is used in Genesis, chapter 7, verse 1 for the ark that God instructs Noah to build a *tebah*. She is to put the child in this ark. In fact, we're even told that this ark is covered with pitch and bitumen just like the ark that God had instructed Noah to build. Noah and Moses both go through watery ordeals which they survive and serve as representatives and leaders of God's people.

Furthermore, in verse 4, we're told that the sister is placed nearby in order to watch. Every practical human precaution is taken to protect the child. This is not a lack of faith on the part of parents. There is no indication that their practical actions are a lack of faith. We may believe in God's providence. That doesn't mean that we don't take responsible action. As Matthew Henry says, "Duty is ours, events are the Lord's." Trust God and keep your powder dry, it has once been said.

But the story, of course, is emphasizing this weak infant that God is going to use to accomplish His sovereign designs. It is God's delight to use that which seems foolish and weak in our eyes, in the eyes of men, to bring about His promises and purposes. Over and over in the story of redemption, God will bring about rescue for His people through the birth of children to people in obscure situations, whether it be Samson or Samuel or David or Jesus. Over and over God displays His sovereign power and His delight to use that which seems foolish and weak in the eyes of men. It's so important for us to remember that principle.

Paul comes back to that principle as he talks about the gospel. You know it may seem foolish in the eyes of the world that the preaching of the message of salvation is the way that God is going to save His people and accomplish His plans in the world. That seems so outdated in our day and age doesn't it? It

seems archaic; it seems almost quaint, but Paul says it is by the foolishness of preaching that God intends to build up His people. We must believe that, even though it doesn't look like it makes a whole lot of sense to us when we're looking at it from a natural perspective. But from a divine perspective, God's delight is to use that which is foolish and weak in the eyes of men. So here right away in the first eleven verses we see God's silent and ironic hand of providence preparing to save his people in a most unlikely way through the birth of this unnamed male Hebrew child.

II. The rescue of Moses.

Then in verses 5 through 7 we see something else. In this passage, the child is rescued, literally drawn out of the water by the daughter of Pharaoh. God's providence is so wondrous that he can use His people's very enemies as a means of blessing to them. Lo and behold, in verse 5 the next thing we see is that one of Pharaoh's own daughters has come down to the Nile to bathe, and she spots the basket, and she sends her maidservant to retrieve it, and she opens it, and she discovers a little, crying baby boy. She immediately recognizes it to be a Hebrew boy, but we are told specifically here in verse 6, that she was touched with compassion for the child. And suddenly, out of nowhere, both in the text and in the situation, springs this girl, this Hebrew girl asking if Pharaoh's daughter wants her to find a Hebrew wet nurse for him. It's very interesting. She's very careful even in the way she asks the question. Look at verse 7. She says and repeats that phrase for you twice. Her emphasis is on the princess, it's not on the child. "Can I do this for you, your Majesty. Could I go for you and find a wet nurse for the child?" The emphasis is all upon the princess. Pharaoh had commanded all the sons of Israel to die in the waters, but God had ordained that this Hebrew child would be saved in the waters. And furthermore that Pharaoh's own daughter would draw him out of this sea of reeds. Don't forget that. We'll come back to that in just a few moments.

Before you pass over the daughter of Pharaoh, note again how realistic is Moses account. If you were attempting to write an account in which you were going to picture your enemies as mean and wicked people, it is unlikely that you would have attributed this kind of compassion to them unless it really happened. And so once again the historicity of Moses' narrative is confirmed in something that if you were writing a broad sheet or propaganda about, you never would have included the compassion of a heathen, the compassion of the daughter of Pharaoh, this genocidal maniac. You never would have invented that. That's got to be true. And so Moses here in telling us all these things is in fact encouraging his people to view the purposes of God in how they interpret their experience in Egypt. By the time Moses is reading this to the people of God, they are out of Egypt. Perhaps many of them are still scratching their heads, "Lord, why did you do that? Why 430 years of torture, of bondage, of slavery. I don't understand it." And Moses is helping his people understand how to read God's providence in their

lives. God is in control every step of the way. God is using even their enemies to bless them. God is working out His own designs and protecting them all the way. One of Pharaoh's own children delivers a Hebrew child who would later save God's children from bondage. God thus uses one from the house of the seed of the serpent to help deliver the seed of the woman. God is emphasizing His sovereignty to Israel, even as He emphasizes their responsibility and as He emphasizes His ability use even that which is evil for His own purposes.

III. Moses saved by his sister and raised by his mother.

Then in verses 8 through 10, this child's sister prevails in her counsel to Pharaoh's daughter, and she pays Moses' mother, the daughter of Pharaoh, pays Moses' mother to nurse her own son. Another example of God's wondrous sovereignty. God's providence is wiser and more wonderful than our minds can conceive as He works His purpose out. In verse 8 this Hebrew girl's suggestion, this is a Hebrew slave girl in a conversation with a princess of Egypt, and her suggestion prevails with the princess of Egypt, who gives her the royal command to go. And the girl goes off, and who does she bring back? Well, unbeknownst to the daughter of Pharaoh, she brings back the mother of this little boy. And not only does the princess entrust this child unwittingly to its own mother. But she pays her to do that which is the desire of her heart.

God has a sense of humor, and in verse 10 this Egyptian princess gives the child a name that means *son of* in Egyptian, but which sounds like and indicates *to draw out* in Hebrew. The princess, you see, draws this child out of the river reeds and names him as such. But Moses will draw the children of Israel out of the sea of reeds. The name she gave him said more than she understood. God is sovereign. Think of all the ironies that set forth the sovereignty of God in this great passage. Pharaoh appoints the waters of the Nile River as his means of destruction of the children of Israel. But God uses the waters of the Nile as the means of Moses' salvation. A daughter who Pharaoh allowed to live, sister of Moses, is used to thwart Pharaoh's plan. Moses' mother saves him by following Pharaoh's orders for his destruction, slightly modified. One of Pharaoh's own family members undermines his plan and saves the very person who is going to be used to liberate Israel from Egypt. An Egyptian princess takes the advice of a Hebrew slave girl. Moses' mother is paid to do what she wants to do most in the world, and she has done so out of Pharaoh's treasury. Moses is prepared to be a leader of these people by being placed into the very court of Pharaoh. And the boy is given a name that means more than that princess ever knew. Think of it. In chapter 1 and in chapters 2, verses 1 through 10, five women are used to route the plans of Pharaoh. The two head midwives, the mother of Moses, the sister of Moses, and the daughter of Pharaoh. Women foil Pharaoh and redeem the redeemer. God moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. God is working through persons who have no obvious power in and of themselves, with the one

exception of Pharaoh's daughter, who would have been in trouble had her father known her deed. And He does it to exalt His purposes, because He is free to use second causes and to work with or against them in the accomplishment of His sovereign will.

I have a friend who has a saying that says, "Always let your enemy pay your salary." Well, that's exactly what God did in this very passage. God in His sovereignty works His will, using the enemies of His people to accomplish blessing for them, and to further His grand design. God is convincing the Hebrews how they need to read His powerful hand of providence in their own experience. It's after the fact. It would have been hard for them to take in some of these things while they're in the middle of this trouble. Even as it's hard for you to believe that God had a purpose in some things that He's doing in your life. I'm the world's worst Arminian when I go through a trial. Suddenly, I'm in control and God is not when trials come. Suddenly, there's no reason, there's no rhyme. God has somehow forgotten His job when I'm in the midst of a trial. That's my sinful heart. God knows that. Why do you think God is taking such care to convince His people that He's always on watch, that He's always working out His plan, and even when our enemies orate against us, His hand is in it for good. That's something worth learning. That's something worth believing. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Let's pray.

Our heavenly Father, we honor You, and we exalt You. We can give lip service, we know. We can give lip service to You as the sovereign God, but when troubles come, it's very hard to believe it. It's certainly hard to believe it in the depths of our heart, in our anguish and in our pain when we can see no good thing that could possibly come out of the circumstances which You in Your wisdom have placed us. We pray, oh God, that in light of this truth of Your word that You work in all things, and that You work even through the schemes of the enemies of Your people, that we would be led tonight to trust You in our own circumstances, whether those circumstances pertain to our job, or to our family, or to whatever relationship. We ask, oh God, that You would give us the trust to rest in You, our Shield and our Defender. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

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