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Exodus 2:1-10 (read 1:22ff) “Moses: Rescued by God’s Providence”

Intro. By the mid 1930’s Hitler’s Germany began a campaign to persecute, imprison, and kill millions of Jews. Hitler blamed the Jews for many of Germany’s problems. He used Darwin’s evolutionary theory to justify what he claimed was the destruction of an inferior race. As a result, many Jews experienced the looting of their homes, and they were driven away and confined to ghettos. Before long many were hauled off to concentration camps. At times thousands of Jews were lined up and shot, and buried in mass graves. Others were gassed. Up to 1.5 million Jewish children died in the Holocaust. We have seen what can happen when the power of government falls into the wrong hands.

Some Christians, like Corrie Ten Boom & her family, decided to do what they could to save the lives of Jewish people. They hid many Jews in their home in Holland from Hitler’s storm troopers. Would you have done that? Or would you have said, “That’s not my problem?” Well I believe she did the right thing, even though eventually her family was caught and sent to a concentration camp, where they suffered greatly, but their lives were spared. God honored their heroic work, and she went on to reach millions with her Christian message.

We live in an evil world, and as a result, we are sometimes faced with very difficult decisions. That’s what happened to Amram & Jochebed,¹ the parents of Moses. They already had at least two children. Miriam was probably their firstborn, and Aaron was born 3 years before Moses. But by the time Moses was born, Pharaoh declared that all male babies among the Hebrews were to be cast into the River. This would result in them being drowned, or eaten by crocodiles. This was another attempt to limit the growth of the Hebrew population. What would you do if the government ordered that your child be killed? What would you do if failing to obey the government’s order could mean your own death?

Well this morning I want to share with you what you should do when you face a crisis situation, especially one that could result in death. It could happen right here in America in the not too distant future. Forces are at work right now to destroy our national sovereignty. If we allow it to happen, our government will become increasingly more powerful, and merge with other nations just like what has happened in Europe. And if evil men or women gain control of this government, your life, or the life of your children could be in jeopardy. If some had their way, they would require you to have an abortion if you have more than 1 or 2 children.

So what should you do when you face a crisis situation? We are going to see that God worked in the time of Moses, to deliver him from death, and prepare him to become a great deliverer for God’s people. God had a plan for his life, and He worked to save Moses. In fact, the only person specifically named in this story is Moses. His parents’ names are not given, even though Moses was the human author of this account. I believe that is because God is the real hero of this story.

¹ **Ex. 6:20** says, “Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father’s sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses.” **Num. 26:59** says, “The name of Amram’s wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam.”

I believe that God has a plan for your life. Yet, there will be times when you will feel that your life is in danger. The lives of your children may be in danger. What should you do in such times? The first thing I want to encourage you to do is this:

I. TRUST GOD TO GRANT PRUDENCE

Difficult times call for difficult decisions. And when you have difficult decisions to make, you certainly need great wisdom. I have good news for you. God promises to grant you wisdom, to enable you to make the right choice, and take the right course of action. He says in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

Now in our story today, the life of a baby boy was seriously threatened. As we have already mentioned, a very powerful king made a decree that all Hebrew baby boys were to be thrown in the River. What was his mother going to do? She had a difficult decision to make. If she disobeyed Pharaoh, her whole family could be imprisoned, or even executed. She knew that she had to save her child. But how? God gave her the wisdom to know what to do. So when we face a life or death situation, we should trust God to grant us the wisdom we need to know what to do. In this story, Moses’ mother teaches us to do the following:

A. We Should Hide the Innocent from their Destroyers – We cannot let any government destroy the lives of innocent children. One thing we could do is hide them. Even so, we read in the last of v.2, “And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.” This was an act of faith on her part. She trusted in God that she would be able to keep him hidden. In fact, Heb. 11:23 says, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.” Once again we see an example of a principle that we discussed last week. Civil authorities are to be defied when their decrees are contrary to fundamental biblical principles, such as the sanctity of life.

As I mentioned earlier, Corrie Ten Boon & her family hid many Jews in their home, seeking to protect them from imprisonment & death. Likewise, Rahab hid the Jewish spies, and saved their lives, which led to her own life being saved (Joshua 2). According to 1 Kings 18:4 King Ahab’s steward Obadiah hid one hundred prophets in 2 caves from Queen Jezebel, and fed them with bread and water. These are just some of the examples of hiding people from their enemies. Even God uses this method at times. Ps. 27:5 says, “For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me....”

So there is nothing wrong with using this method to save lives. God expects us to use some common sense. If an innocent person is in danger, hide them, and pray that God keeps them concealed. Moses’ mother also teaches us to stand against the ungodly demands of the state. My God give us parents who aren’t afraid to take a stand for what is right in these dark, sinful days!

Furthermore, you can trust God to give you wisdom to:

B. Take Other Necessary Steps to Save Lives – A newborn baby sleeps quite a lot. But as they get a little older, they don’t sleep as much and they cry more and louder. By the time he was 3 months old, Moses wasn’t sleeping as much, and he could really scream at the top of his voice. So we read in v.3, “But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him,

daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank." Jochebed would have been foolish to keep her child in the house when a guard passing by might have heard his cry. It would have meant instant death for Moses. So Moses' mother felt that a new course of action was necessary to save Moses. Therefore, God gave her a wise plan. Pharaoh said that baby boys were to be cast into the River. Well, if that must be so, then Moses' mother decided to provide an ark of safety for her son. She took bulrush or papyrus reeds and made a basket. Since it was to go into water, she covered it with pitch to ensure that it would not sink, and the baby would remain dry. Small Egyptian river boats were made in the same way. She even provided a covering for it to provide added protection for her baby. I believe it is significant that the reed basket was called an "ark" in our text, the same word that is only used elsewhere in reference to Noah's ark. That's because it served a similar purpose. Just as Noah's ark saved lives, even so this basket was intended to save the life of Moses.

By the way, God has provided an ark of safety for your soul. You have sinned, and if your sins have not been forgiven, your soul is in danger of hell. What will you do? Look to Jesus. He died on the cross for your sins. He will protect you from the storm of God's righteous judgment, if you trust in Him!

Now getting back to our story, the ark alone would not save his life for very long. The baby would still need to be rescued. But Jochebed had done all that she could do. Now, she just placed him in God's hands. This, too, was an act of faith. She just believed that God would direct some compassionate person to find her baby, and save him from certain death. It took real faith to put the child in the river, the very place where the young boys were being destroyed! Jochebed did not focus on the terrible human predicament she was in. Instead, she focused her attention on God, who can work in amazing ways to accomplish His purposes.

Right now you may feel unable to see through your troubles. Focus instead on God, and trust Him for the wisdom you need to find a way out. That is all He needs to begin His work in you.

There is another application I want to make. Parents, we should take prudent steps to protect our children. But there comes a time when we just have to place them in the hands of God. Some parents try to hold on to their children far too long. You need to allow them to grow up and become an adult. They can't grow up if you make them stay within your protective eyesight all the time. It takes faith to just leave them in the hand of God.

So after Moses' mother had done all that she should do to save her child, she had to do what we should do next:

II. TRUST GOD TO GRANT PROTECTION

Perhaps the main point of our story is to show how God worked to protect the life of Moses, whom He would someday use to save His people. And this story also shows one way God protects us, and that is by His providence. The providence of God simply means that since God is the ruler of this universe, He can control the circumstance of life to accomplish His purposes. I believe that God had called Moses from the womb to be the deliverer of His people. He was not about to let Pharaoh destroy him. So I want you to notice from our text how God providentially worked to protect baby Moses from death:

A. God Used a Baby's Countenance – We read in the last of v.2, "And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months." In the providence of God, baby Moses was

unusually beautiful as a baby. The word translated “beautiful” (טוב) means “good, pleasant, agreeable” to the senses. Or it means that Moses seemed to be better, more excellent than other Hebrew children. I suppose every mother thinks more highly of their child than reality, but in this case, there must have been something special about baby Moses, and his mother perceived that God had a special plan for him. Something in the look of the infant, as it lay on her bosom, touched her with a dim hope. What hope? She may have remembered the promise of God that He would deliver them from Egypt, and lead them back to the Promised Land (Gen. 15:13-14).²

So God providentially worked by giving baby Moses an unusual countenance. That helped his parents know that God had a special plan for their son. This led his mother to hide him for 3 months. When it was no longer possible to hide him, Moses’ mother faced the difficult choice: give her son up for adoption, or risk his death. She chose to give up her son, if necessary, to save his life. So I believe she took steps hoping that someone would find her baby, and take him as their own child.

Many young, unwed mothers have faced a similar decision. They could choose an abortion, but God has a plan for that child. It is wrong to kill innocent human life. But many teenage mothers do not have enough support to raise a child on their own. Such mothers can choose to do what Moses’ mother did. You can give you baby up for adoption. There are many, many Christian couples who would love to adopt a child. Abortion is by no means the only option a teenage mother has.

Now let’s see how else God worked behind the scenes to protect this Hebrew baby. We have already seen that Moses’ mother decided to place him in an ark, cover him up, and place the little ark along the bank of the River among the reeds. Then she told her daughter to stay nearby, to watch what would happen to him. Well guess what happened? Pharaoh’s daughter & her maidens passed by as they were walking along the river bank. She had come to bathe or wash.³ It may well have been that in the providence of God she just “happened” to pass that particular spot that day. But even if Jochebed deliberately placed the little ark where she knew Pharaoh’s daughter would come, that would not necessarily mean that she would see the ark, or do anything about it. So God used something else to save Moses:

B. God Used a Woman’s Curiosity – When Pharaoh’s daughter came to the river, we read in the last of v.5 that “she saw the ark among the reeds.” No doubt her curiosity was awakened as to what was inside that little ark. It was covered. She could not see what was inside. So the verse goes on to say, “she sent her maid to get it.” God created curiosity, and put it to work here in this incident. She just could not ignore that little ark.

I can imagine her excitement as her servant girl brought the basket to her. No doubt she was mulling in her mind, “What’s in it?” Then, she began to lift the lid, and v.6 says, “She saw the child.” She immediately realized that it was one of the Hebrew children. She knew that her father had ordered the destruction of every Hebrew baby boy. But God providentially steps in to cause her to want to keep the baby. He not only used the woman’s curiosity, but we also see that:

² Arthur Pink even says that the parents of Moses even received a direct communication from God, instructing them what to do. He bases this on Heb. 11:23.

³ The Hebrew word means “wash.” It is not clear what she washed, her whole body, or just part of her body. Some may question the account of Pharaoh’s daughter bathing in a river, but this was in harmony with the customs of ancient Egypt. They believed the Nile River had special powers to impart fruitfulness and prolonged life.

C. God Used a Baby's Cry – Notice in v.6 what happened next, “behold, the baby wept.” The baby could have been asleep. Instead, perhaps at the very moment she opened the ark, the child began to cry. In fact, the Lord may have pinched little Moses right when she opened the little ark!

It was the baby's cry that led to the next way God worked to protect Moses:

D. God Used a Woman's Compassion – I believe God made women to respond to a baby's cry. When Andrew & David were babies, they would wake up & cry in the middle of the night. Guess who would wake up, and guess who would stay asleep, unless I got punched? Indeed, women are made to respond to the cry of a baby. So I am not surprised that in the last of v.6 we read, “So she had compassion on him...” In this situation God brought together two things that He has made—a baby's cry and a woman's heart. Pharaoh's daughter was moved with compassion to save this little one, in spite of her father's direct orders. Compassion has a way of conquering pride of race and social class. And don't forget, Moses was a good looking baby, and that probably helped with her decision as well.

Do you hear the cries of babies & children who are hungry? Do you hear the cries of young people who are hurting? If we allow our God-given compassion to work in our hearts, we will respond to the cries and hurts of those around us, regardless of their race or social class. Are you willing to adopt a child? Are you willing to provide a foster home for a child? Will you give to our World Hunger offering?

So we see in our story today a great example of how God works by His providence to protect His people. Can you look back on your own life, and see how God protected you, even when you were not yet a believer? Wayne Williams told of a time when he was serving on a river boat in Vietnam. A shipmate stayed up all night and was too tired to pilot the vessel, so he asked Wayne to switch places. On the way back that day the ship took enemy fire, and his shipmate died in the very place Wayne would have been. I believe God had a purpose for Wayne, to serve in this church as a deacon, a S.S. teacher, and in other ways. So He worked by His providence to protect his life.

We have seen that in difficult times, we should trust God to grant prudence, we should trust God to grant protection. And finally, we should:

III. TRUST GOD TO GRANT PROVISION

This story is a great example of the way God provides for His people. Moses & his family illustrate 2 ways that God provides for His people:

A. God Will Provide Nourishment – It is fine that Pharaoh's daughter found Moses, had compassion on him, and saved him. But how could she nourish him? She did not give birth to him. They did not have formula & baby bottles in those days. She needed another woman who was capable of nursing a child. Well, God has just the right woman in mind. In vv.7-9 we read, “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.’ So the maiden went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, ‘Take this child away and nurse him for me...’” Wow! Not only did God save Moses from death, but He so worked that Pharaoh's daughter listened to the suggestion of a slave girl, and Moses' own mother got to nurse him! Furthermore, not only did God provide for Moses, but He also provided

for his family. We read in the last of v.9 that Pharaoh's daughter said to Moses' mother, "I will give you your wages." She even paid Jochebed to nurse her own baby! You cannot beat that, friends. However, that's the kind of thing God does for those who love Him, and trust in Him.

The noted hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, once found herself in need of five dollars, a good sum in the 1870s. She had nowhere to turn and took the need to the Lord in prayer. Soon after, there came a knock at the door. A stranger stood there with a gift in the exact amount she needed. Fanny Crosby marveled at the way the Lord had led her in praying and how He led the man to give the exact amount. Immediately, she wrote the hymn "All the Way My Savior Leads Me" [#62]. Written around 1875, it was the expression of gratitude for the way the Lord had provided for her.⁴ Here are some of the words from this great hymn (read verse 2):

Friend, if God provided for Moses & his family, and if God provided for Fanny Crosby, I believe God will provide for you. Just trust in His promise.

B. God Will Provide Preparation for Our Life's Work – God saved Moses because He had a special plan for his life. Some day He would use him to deliver His people from bondage. He knew that He would talk face to face with one of the most powerful men on earth at that time. So God provided the preparation he would need to deal with the Egyptian leaders. V.10 says, "And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." She adopted Moses as her own son as soon as he was weaned. That meant that he grew up in a royal home. He grew up with the finest education Egypt offered at the time. Acts 7:22 says that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." Through such an education as this, he received just the training required for the performance of the work to which God had called him. There is a striking antithesis here. He was the child of a slave, and yet became the son of a queen. He was born in a hut, and lived in a palace. He inherited poverty, and enjoyed unlimited wealth.

This is an illustration of Job 5:13, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them." Pharaoh proposed to "deal shrewdly" with the Israelites, and this, or order that they might not "go up out of the land" (1:10). Yet, in the end, God so works that Pharaoh gives food, lodging, and education to the very man who accomplished the very thing that he was trying to prevent! Pharaoh's plot to kill little Hebrew boys was turned into one of the means of delivering God's people from bondage.

It was needed that the deliverer should come from the heart of the system from which he was to set his brethren free. If he was to hate and to war against idolatry, and to rescue an unwilling people from it, he must know the rottenness of the system, and must have lived close enough to it to know what went on behind the scenes, and how foully it smelled when near.

Conclusion: Jochebed trusted God to give her prudence. She trusted God to protect her son. Finally, she trusted God to provide for her son. Well, God honored her faith. He did give her a wise plan that led to the salvation of her son. He did protect him, and provide for him. God provided for his nutritional needs, and for his educational needs. As a result of her faith & God's work, her son became a great man of God. He was the one man whom God had chosen to be the deliverer of the people of God, and the one who was destined to be known as the Great Lawgiver. He was the author of the first 5 books of the Bible.

Clearly, God was working behind the scenes to accomplish His purpose. I'm glad that God still works today by His providence. He has providentially worked in my life. On the very

⁴ Eddie Rasnake and Rick Shepherd, *Following God Leader's Guide* (AMG Publishers).

day that I announced by call to preach, the president of Criswell College was filling the pulpit. Dr. Patterson invited me to prepare for the ministry there, and I have no doubt it was God's will. I do not think I would have received a better education anywhere else. Back in 1987 the Pastor Search Committee from Swift Creek Baptist Church contacted me. I felt my work was completed at my church, and I was ready to move on to a new field of service. However, the committee felt that they should pursue another candidate. But during that process, the candidate made a request that the committee could not agree with. So they asked one of their members to contact me again. Guess when that was? It was the very morning after I had resigned from my church! And here I am 20 years later serving God here.

Yes, God works by His providence to accomplish His purposes. I may not know what you are going through today, but God does. When you feel threatened, look to Him. He's in control. He will give you wisdom to make the right decisions. He will protect you. He will provide for you. Place your faith in Him. He is worthy of your trust.

Let me remind you of something far more serious. You have sinned against a holy God. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." Do you know that your sins have been forgiven? If not, turn to Jesus who died on the cross for your sins. Place your faith in Him, and He will be your ark of safety. He will deliver you from the just punishment of your sin.

Sources: Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale House & Zondervan, 1991); Alan Carr, sermonnotebook.org; Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary* (accessed from *Online Bible*), completed by 1832; Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2007; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 reprint); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1981); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972); Warren Wiersbe, *Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor Books/SP Publications, 1993). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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