

Message #4**Exodus 2:1-10**

The providential sovereignty of God is absolutely beyond our ability to even begin to grasp. Think about this for a moment; what we have here in Exodus is an evil, power-crazed, lying Pharaoh who has issued a governmental edict to kill all Hebrew baby boys. If the leadership accomplishes its goal, it exterminates the nation Israel and puts an end to a lineage that would one day bring the Savior of the world into the world. Now how do you topple that kind of government? How do you put a stop this? What do you do?

If the plan were left to us, we would probably have some military force from some part of the world, sweep into Egypt and assassinate the evil Pharaoh. We would have some special military ops team sneak into Egypt and take out this Pharaoh, much like we did with Osama Bin Laden. That is probably what we would do, but that is not what God did.

To topple this ruthless and evil power, God used three women –Moses’ mother, Moses’ sister and Pharaoh’s daughter. God would providentially put an end to this domination by sovereignly using three women who would end up protecting the one boy who would deliver the nation.

What we see here in this text is this:

GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL SOVEREIGNTY PERMITTED A BABY BOY TO BE BORN WHO WAS PROTECTED BY THREE WOMEN, WHO WOULD GROW UP TO COMPLETELY DELIVER ISRAEL FROM THE EVIL BONDAGE OF THE EGYPTIANS.

These verses are some of the most amazing verses concerning the providential, protective sovereignty of God that you will ever see. God is sovereignly and providentially directing human affairs. As one Bible expositor said, “while Pharaoh was planning Israel’s extermination, God was planning Israel’s emancipation.”

We will notice that **verse 1** begins with a connective “now,” which immediately links us back to the previous verses, which describes the fact that Hebrew boys were supposed to be cast into the Nile River. What God was about to do is use the Nile River to bring a Hebrew baby into existence that He would use to deliver the Hebrews. This is an amazing display of the providential sovereignty of God. One writer called this the providence of great destiny.

Now here are the providential facts that lead to this amazing deliverance:

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #1 – A Hebrew man marries a Hebrew woman. **2:1**

During the time of the terrible oppression of the Egyptians, a man from the house of Levi had married a daughter of Levi. Now at this point, Levi has no priestly name, but ultimately they would later. We don’t get their names here, but we do later. The man’s name was Amram and the woman’s name was Jochebed (Ex. 6:20).

Now I am certain that when this couple married, they had no idea that God was going to use them in such a remarkable way by producing the one baby who would deliver Israel.

There are a couple of observations we want to make about this first verse:

(Observation #1) - Both the man and woman were from the Levi line.

Although at this point, it has not been revealed to Moses that this will be the tribe of Israel who will be chosen by God to be the spiritual leader, who will provide the link between God and Israel, the fact is Moses was clearly in the right lineage.

(Observation #2) - The actual date of their marriage is unclear.

Calvin believes they were actually married before the death edict had been given. Aaron was three years older than Moses and there is no hint that his mother felt his life was in jeopardy, so we may assume that this marriage had taken place a few years before Pharaoh's insane edict.

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #2 – A Hebrew woman has a beautiful baby boy. **2:2**

This birth of this baby took place right at the time when Jewish boys were being killed. Every Jewish woman desired to give birth to a baby boy because she knew that one would come who would be the deliverer of Israel.

Now actually at the time of the birth of Moses, this couple already had two other children. This baby is the third child for this husband and wife. The first baby was a daughter, whose name was Miriam (2:4/15:20). The second baby was a son they named Aaron (6:20), who was three years older than Moses (7:7). So this was the third child born to this couple.

When the mother saw her baby, she saw that he was “beautiful.” Now every mother thinks her baby is beautiful, so that is not noteworthy. We must assume that by using this word there is something in it that reflected the sovereign, providential work of God. In other words, this mother sensed something very unique about this baby.

The word “beautiful” is a Hebrew word (tov) and is the same word used in Genesis 1 and seven times is translated by the English word “good.” So by using this word this is more than just a mother thinking she has a nice lovely baby. This is something unusual about the work of God here and Moses' mother could see it. In fact, when Stephen referred to this very event in Acts 7:20, he said Moses “was lovely in the sight of God.” So it is very probable that Jochebed realized this is a very special child that God has brought into the world for His sovereign purposes. By the way, Moses would have learned about this through what his mother would have told him.

We may recall that God specifically told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt and oppressed for 400 years (Gen. 15:13). God promised Abram that He would deliver them from that oppression and bring them back to the Promised Land (Gen. 15:14-16).

It may very well be that this family had done the math and knew something special was about to happen. It is very possible that as Moses' mother looked at this baby, she realized this is the one God will use to deliver His people.

Now the text says "she hid him for three months." The word "hid" is one that means to hide something for safekeeping, like you would hide a treasure of great value (Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, p. 87). So Moses' mother saw Moses as a great treasure from God. He was no ordinary child and they were very careful to hide him for three months.

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #3 – A Hebrew mother protects her Hebrew baby boy. **2:3-4**

Now the emphasis of these verses is on the action of the mother. It does not mean that the father was not involved or supportive, but with a young baby, the mother would play a predominant role.

Now we may assume that many babies had been put to death, but Jochebed was not about to permit that to happen with her special son. She hid him as best as she could for three months, but she could not hide him forever. Apparently at the three month point, pressure was intensifying to kill baby boys and she knew she needed to act.

These Egyptians were ruthless and would think nothing of taking a 3-month-old baby boy and tossing him in the Nile to drown and feed to the crocodiles.

According to **verse 3**, what this mother did was to construct a basket out of Egyptian papyrus reed and cover it with pitch and tar. The noun "basket" is the same word used for Noah's ark. In fact, the Hebrew word for basket, "tebah," is only found here and in the flood story of Genesis 6-8 where it is translated "ark."

The papyrus reed is a stalk that is vivid green and triangular form and is tapered at the top. It can grow to about 10 feet in length. It grows on the banks of the Nile in marshy areas. It is available to everyone because it grew everywhere along the Nile and was not costly like wood.

The mother covered it with the same thing Noah did the ark (Gen. 6:14), which is "tar" and "pitch." The tar held the strips together and the pitch made the basket watertight so that no water could leak in.

Now she put her precious baby into the basket and set it in among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. This would do at least three things: 1) It would muffle the baby's cry from the ears of those who would kill him; 2) It would hide the baby from the eyes of those who would kill him; 3) It would put the baby in a place where he could be discovered.

Now carefully notice the text in **verse 3** says she put this basket on "the bank of the Nile." This is a very specific spot on the river and this is a very specific bank. There is a debate on this point, but it is very possible by this construction that this bank was known to be the place where the Pharaoh's daughter would bathe.

One question that is worth asking is, “Why didn’t she do this with Aaron three years earlier?” Probably the death edict had not yet been given, but also this reinforces the fact that she knew Moses was a very special child of God.

Moses’ mother did not just create a safe and secure basket for Moses, but she also wanted to make sure he was okay. She did not just put him in some swamp to see if some crocodile would find him or just float him down the river. She specifically had him in a place where she knew he would be safe and according to **verse 4**, Moses’ sister, Miriam, stood watch to make sure nothing bad happened to her brother. Miriam was probably between 8-12 years old at this time. Had she been much older, she would have had to work. However, being a young girl, she could watch over her brother and not draw attention to herself or Moses.

This teaches us something about how God providentially works and how faith works. Faith that God blesses is very rational, it is very wise, it is very careful and it is very active. Moses’ mother believed God was going to use her child, but she still had to carefully construct a basket and design it so it would not leak water. She also had his sister stand guard to make sure nothing bad happened. God-honoring faith is a faith that uses one’s brains. God-honoring faith does move out carefully and confidently and does what is humanly possible to set the stage for the blessings of God. Faith that trusts in God’s sovereignty does everything it can humanly to secure the results. This mother had done everything she humanly could do and now it was time to trust God.

Trusting in God’s providential sovereignty does not negate human responsibility. We are responsible to do what we can humanly do and then trust God for the results. That is exactly what Moses mother did.

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #4 – Pharaoh’s daughter finds the basket and the baby. **2:5-6**

The daughter is not named, but more than likely this is Hatshepsut, who was the daughter of Thutmose I. She had gone “down” to bathe in the Nile. Houses were built on high ground areas because of the overflow of the Nile, so all had to go down. Now why didn’t the Pharaoh’s daughter bathe in a bathtub, which she most certainly had? The Egyptians considered the Nile to be a sacred river. They worshipped all kinds of things, including the Nile River.

Now carefully observe the story in **verse 5**; the daughter is bathing and the maidens are walking alongside the Nile. They did this to protect the privacy of the daughter who was bathing and to help with any personal needs.

From the part of the river that she was in, she could spot this basket in the reeds. The maidens could not see it from their angle, but the daughter of Pharaoh could see it from hers. When she spotted the basket in the reeds, she sent one of her maids to bring it to her.

When she opened the basket there are five things that happened:

- 1) She saw the child.
- 2) She saw it was a boy.
- 3) She saw and heard he was crying.
- 4) She had pity on him.
- 5) She knew he was a Hebrew boy.

Now how did she know he was a Hebrew boy? Probably four ways:

- 1) There were physical differences in the look between Jews and Egyptians.
- 2) There were differences in clothing between the Hebrew children and Egyptian children.
- 3) She discovered this baby in an area in close proximity to where Hebrew families lived.
- 4) No Egyptian baby needed to be hidden, only Hebrew babies.

Now **verse 6** says “and **she had pity on him,**” or **compassion or mercy**. The word “pity” (chamal) means to have compassion on someone who is totally helpless and vulnerable (Sam. 23:21), (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 287). This is exactly what God does with us sinners, we are totally helpless and vulnerable and He helps us and saves us. God helps the helpless. He helps those who are in no position to help themselves.

Now who do you think is responsible for this baby crying at this very moment? It was God. God’s providence caused this baby to cry. Unless a woman is cold-hearted, most women have a natural inclination to take care of a baby and this Egyptian woman was no exception to that. God knew it. He knew that this woman would become key to him delivering His people.

From Pharaoh’s daughter’s perspective, what she found was a beautiful Hebrew baby boy who appeared to have been abandoned by his Hebrew parents. But nothing could be further from the truth. This Hebrew baby was sovereignly put there by God and was being protected by God.

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #5 – The baby’s sister asks Pharaoh’s daughter if she can find a Hebrew nurse. **2:7**

Now Miriam had been watching and listening and probably one of the things that Pharaoh’s daughter was saying is, “he is crying because he is probably hungry.” At just that moment Miriam came to the daughter and asks if she could call a Hebrew nurse to nurse this baby. Now that tells us that Miriam could speak Egyptian as well as Hebrew.

Other than in **verse 1**, there is no man in this story at all. What we have here is the providential sovereignty of God directing some women to accomplish one of the greatest deliverances in history. You would never dream that a little 8-year-old girl and a woman taking a bath would be the means of God sovereignly toppling an evil empire, but this is how God did it.

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #6 – Pharaoh’s daughter hires Moses’ mother to take care of Moses. **2:8-9**

This is absolutely amazing. Miriam goes and gets her mother. Not only was Moses’ mother back to feeding and raising Moses, but she was getting paid to do it.

When Moses' mother put that baby in the basket, she would have never dreamed an outcome like this would be possible. When we purpose to do God's will, we will see things we never believed would be possible.

PROVIDENTIAL FACT #7 – Moses' mother raised Moses and brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. **2:10**

We are not told as to the specific age that Moses was taken to Pharaoh's daughter. During these times it was normal to nurse a child for 3-4 years, so it would have been at least that age. We do know that he was old enough to have learned something about his ancestry and the true God of the Bible.

This is a very important part of this story. It was critical that Moses' mother spend time raising Moses because she could instill within him that he was a Hebrew. During those years, she taught Moses about his Jewish heritage. God let Moses' mother have these years so she could teach him biblical truths that would affect him the rest of his life. Also, he would have had contact with her and his family, even when he was being trained as an Egyptian.

Parents need to carefully consider this point. God entrusts children to parents and part of their responsibility is not just to physically care for them, but to also spiritually teach them about God and the Scriptures.

There does come a point when a parent must give the child up. There does come a time when God says it is time to let the child go. When that happens, it is good to know two things:

- 1) That we have done what we can to instruct the child in the right ways of God.
- 2) God's providential sovereignty will be with that child no matter where he goes.

Pharaoh's daughter is the one who named him "Moses." In Hebrew the word is "Mosheh," which comes from the verb "mashah," which means to "draw out."

What no one knew at this point is that the baby drawn out of this water would be one who would deliver Israel through the water. God's providential plan was fully operative. He wanted Moses right where he was because He was going to use him in dramatic ways.

A deliverer had been born. God sovereignly used three women to do behind scenes things that would ultimately be used by Him to topple the evil Egyptian world.

PARTING LESSONS:

- 1) God can sovereignly use a woman to accomplish major things in His program, even a woman who gives up her baby for adoption. Tremendous act of love; she could not protect baby.
- 2) Young girls who obey their parents may be greatly used by God in remarkable ways.
- 3) Relying on God's sovereignty does not eliminate human responsibility to do what we humanly are able to do.
- 4) God does for us what Pharaoh's daughter did for Moses; He helps the helpless; He saves those who cannot save themselves.