**God Chooses and Trains Moses**

April 11, 2021

Exodus 1:1-2:25

Key Verse 2:10 “When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, ‘I drew him out of the water.’”

The word “Exodus” means “to leave.” We call it “Exodus” because the departure of Israel from Egypt is the dominant historical fact in this book. Exodus records the history of the Israelites from leaving Egypt to receiving the Law at Mt. Sinai. God brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and rescued them from the slavery, and began to train them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Even though they were freed from slavery, they did not live like free people. They were so used to slave life that they still acted like slaves. So God gave them many trainings such as daily bread training to overcome their slave mentality. The Israelites were on the journey to the Promised Land, but many of them did not make it due to their disobedience. Likewise God delivered us from the power of sin through Jesus Christ. We are free in Jesus Christ. Now we are on the journey to the kingdom of God. But many people are so used to their sinful lifestyle that they still act like slaves to sin. We can learn from the Israelites’ failures on what not to do. 1 Corinthians 10:6 says, “Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”

Central to the story of Exodus is the man Moses. God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt all the way to the Promised Land of Canaan. In today’s passage, God saved Moses in a miraculous way and trained him in preparation for the holy mission. God allowed his chosen people to go through many hardships for a long time, but he never abandoned them. Through this passage, may we learn how God saves us, prepares us through many training for his holy mission.

The book of Genesis ends with the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob born to his beloved Rachel. God had sent Joseph into Egypt ahead of Jacob’s family, by being sold into slavery there by his jealous brothers. But God was with Joseph in Egypt, and Joseph was exalted by Pharaoh to become the prime minister. Joseph’s main responsibility was to oversee the preparations for the seven years of the famine that God had revealed to Pharaoh in his dreams. And the famine came, so that all of Egypt and many surrounding nations were in need. Joseph managed the affairs of Egypt with great integrity, and as a result he saved many lives and at the same time built up the nation of Egypt. Spiritually speaking, the most important thing Joseph did was to serve as a shepherd for Jacob and his eleven sons. Joseph helped his brothers to repent of their sin of selling him as a slave. Once they had repented, he arranged for them and their father Jacob to come down and settle in Egypt. They would live as shepherds in Goshen. Before he died, Joseph promised them that the Lord would come to their rescue and bring them back out of Egypt and into the Promised Land in Canaan. So they embalmed him and kept his remains in a box, ready to take with them to their home in Canaan.

Look at verses 1:6-7. “Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.” God blessed Israel in Egypt. Their circumstances seemed to have been better than those of the Egyptians themselves, who had all sold themselves into slavery to the Pharaoh under Joseph. Things began to change, however. Look at verses 1:8-10. “Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. ‘Look,’ he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’” Gradually, what Joseph had done for Egypt was forgotten. Then a new king came to power, and as he surveyed his country, he saw that the Israelites had become a potentially significant destabilizing factor. He calculated that the Israelite population was growing faster than that of the Egyptians. Also the Israelites kept themselves separate from the Egyptians. They were ethnically and culturally and religiously alien to the Egyptians. Although they were not hostile at the moment, things could change. He foresaw a doomsday scenario in which a powerful nation would invade, entice Israel to turn against and help defeat Egypt, then leave. So he took three increasingly radical steps to eliminate the threat.

Look at verses 11-14. “So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.” Pharaoh set out to oppress the Israelites and completely subjugate them to the authority of Egypt, by putting them to work in many building projects and simultaneously destroying their spirit as a people. He put slave drivers over them, and used them ruthlessly in great construction projects as well as for labor in the fields.

But it did not work. Then Pharaoh made a drastic decision to carry out population control over the Israelites through the midwives Shiphrah and Puah. He commanded them to kill every baby boy born to a Hebrew, but to let every girl live. It is a subtle infanticide. Today it is called partial birth abortion. The midwives must have been shocked at such command, but they feared God and refused to do such a wicked thing. Pharaoh called them in and demanded an explanation. Look at verses 19-21. “The midwives answered Pharaoh, ‘Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.’ So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.” We see through the faith of the midwives that the slave system in Egypt had not broken the Israelites’ faith in God. God continued to demonstrate his love and mercy when his people put their trust in him. But Pharaoh was not easily dissuaded. Look at verse 22. “Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: ‘Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.’” Pharaoh commanded the entire Egyptians (not just the midwives) to kill baby Israelite boys. Pharaoh moved from subtle infanticide to open, public infanticide.

At this time of great spiritual struggle for the nation of Israel, there was a beautiful love story between a Levite man and woman. They already had two children, Miriam and Aaron. But in spite of the king’s harsh edict, a third child was conceived, and a son was born to them. His name would be Moses. The parents were under great stress because of their new baby. The king’s edict demanded that the boy be thrown into the Nile and drowned. But when the parents looked at Moses, they saw that he was a fine child, not an ordinary child at all. They believed that God had a special purpose for their son. They decided to risk disobeying the king, and kept the boy hidden for three months. After three months, the mother realized they could not do this anymore. Still, she had faith that God would help her son. She took a papyrus basket and made it watertight. Then she put the baby inside, covered the basket and put it in the river, but among the reeds near the bank of the Nile. She had her daughter Miriam watch to see what would happen. As she had hoped, Pharaoh’s daughter came down to bathe in the river at that time. She saw the basket and told a servant girl to get it for her. She looked inside the basket and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. She realized that it was a Hebrew baby placed into the river in the basket to avoid her father’s edict. Her heart was moved by the faith and love of the mother who had done this. She must have been oppressed by her own father’s cruelty and ruthlessness. She must have been amazed at the Hebrew mother’s faith. She decided to keep the baby herself. It was God’s answer to the prayers of Moses’ parents. Miriam immediately understood that her mother’s prayers had been answered. So with great faith and courage she went up to Pharaoh’s daughter and said, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?”

Look at verses 2:8-10. “"Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, ‘Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.’ So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, ‘I drew him out of the water.’” In this way, God accepted the faith of Moses’ parents, and chose Moses as his servant. Moses was raised at first by his own mother, who could plant in him his identity as a child of God. Then he was adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter, and he was raised as a Prince of Egypt. Acts 7:22 says, “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.” Moses received princely training as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. By God’s grace, his life’s fate was changed from being killed as a baby boy to becoming a great man in the world. But this turnabout was not for his sake. He had been chosen by God and was being trained by him for the sake of his enslaved people.

At the age of 40, Moses was already a man with many responsibilities and with great prospects as one of the princes of Egypt. But Moses was not comfortable in his role. One day, he went out to look at his own people, the Hebrews. Look at verses 2:11-12. “One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.” Moses saw his people in their suffering. He was raised as an Egyptian and enjoyed all of the privileges of being an Egyptian. He could have considered himself lucky to have escaped such a hard life. So he could have closed his eyes and enjoyed the privileges of being a prince. But Moses was not indifferent to the sufferings of his people. He chose to identify himself as one of God’s people. Hebrews 11:24-26 says, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” At that moment, Moses made an irreversible decision. He sided with a Hebrew being beaten by an Egyptian, and killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. He hoped that the Hebrews would understand his heart, and embrace him as one of their own. Acts 7:25 says, “Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.” Instead, the Hebrews despised him as an outsider and self-appointed “hero” who knew nothing of their real problems. Look at verses 2:13-14. “The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’ The man said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought, ‘What I did must have become known.’” Moses must have been so discouraged. He had wanted to live up to God’s high calling for his life. But it was much harder to do so than he had imagined. His zeal outran his judgment. He needed still more training before he would be ready to lead his people to their freedom. Moses needed humbleness training. He needed to repent of his pride that he could save his people with his own power. For 40 years in the wilderness while taking care of sheep, he learned to be patient and to depend on God.

Moses ran away to Midian, in the western portion of Modern Saudi Arabia, perhaps along the Gulf of Aqaba. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah, his concubine. They knew of God, and there Moses met a priest of Midian, Reuel, or Jethro. This priest had seven daughters. Moses rescued the priest’s daughters from some bully shepherds, and watered their flock. Then Reuel invited Moses to stay with him, become a shepherd for his flock, and to marry his daughter Zipporah. Moses’ life had changed once more by 180 degrees. His dream of rescuing his people seemed crushed forever. Perhaps he thought he had no reason left to live. But his father-in-law was a good influence on him. He had a son, Gershom, meaning, “a foreigner there.” Moses confessed that he was a foreigner living in a foreign land. But God comforted him with a family and a son. God began training him in very practical ways how to be a shepherd and leader, even under the Midianite priest. Moses was living as a shepherd 40 years in Midian. In that time, the Pharaoh died. But the situation of the Israelites only grew worse. They were strong and vigorous, but they were reaching the limits of their strength. So they turned to God and cried out to God in prayer, and God heard their cries and was concerned about them. He remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the time to fulfill his promise to them was drawing near.

In today’s passage, we learn that God always takes care of his people. Amazingly God used women in this passage to spoil Pharaoh’s effort to destroy the Israelites; the midwives, the Israelites mothers, Moses’ mother and sister, the Pharaoh’s daughter. God chooses and blesses those who fear God and worship him as God. After God has chosen us for his purpose, he trains us for our good. May God bless you to know that God has chosen you, and that he will train you until you can bear fruit for his kingdom!

Big Idea: God chooses and trains his servant