

Exodus 2

Sermon Title: Divine Preparation

EXODUS - Then & Now, Our Covenant Keeping God

INTRODUCTION

You'll recall that last time we began looking at Exodus that we saw the link from Genesis where the forming narrative continues as God fulfills His promises to His people.

We mentioned how God is the Hero in this book Who works through regular servants like Moses in accord with His covenant love.

Although it doesn't say it directly, the overarching theme right out of the gate is on God's covenantal love for His people. We will continue to see this theme over and over throughout the book.

I want to collect our thoughts into chapter 2 here by thinking of a father (and/or mother) preparing his/her/their kids for life...

- We see this importance in Deuteronomy 6.
- Those parents in here (or think of your parents), why do we do what we do with our kids? Well, hopefully, we're preparing them for life.
- Last night, we squeezed into our very busy season of life right now what we called a family date night. Laura has really wanted to take our boys to a theatrical play for some time now. So, when we heard The Music Man was coming here in our own community, we made plans to go as a family. Additionally, Laura and I thought we would go to a really nice restaurant (using a gift card a friend gave to us awhile back) and just have a special evening as a family. It's things that we should really be teaching in all settings, but stuff like... how to behave in a restaurant, where your napkin goes, not playing with the silverware, speaking softly/not shouting, eating your food thankfully, saying please/thank you to our server, how to hold the door for Mommy (and others), etc...
- It's stuff like this that we teach our kiddos on a daily basis because we are trying to prepare them for life.

As we enter chapter 2 God draws our attention to the man, His servant, Whom He selects and prepares to use as a key figure in Israel's deliverance and continuing history. As we look through the Scriptures, God always has His servants that He prepares and raises up right at the right providential moments. From Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, Ruth, Rahab, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Daniel, Mordecai, Esther, John the Baptist, the disciples, Paul, etc...

Ironically here in Exodus, the guy God chooses (Moses) is prepared and not launched out until he's 80 years old!

As we work through chapter 2, we'll see... how God prepares a regular man to serve Him. Our God is the God of the details. He is always working His plan and preparing His people. Let's look at the Divine interaction in the lives of His children.

MAIN BODY

Chapter 2:

Vs. 1-10 Divine Preparation from Birth

- We are introduced to a Levi man and woman in chapter 2 who together have a son. This detail is significant as we later learn that the tribe of Levi becomes the religious/spiritual leadership for Israel. Thus, their son would be rightly poised in God's harmony of appointed leadership of God's people. All these details come together without the actual "players" in the story realizing it.

* As one commentator put it, "The Scriptures describe other prequalifications of persons called to play a role in the divine plan of redemption. Abraham's prequalification involved his family's willingness to settle in Canaan, which then led to the revelation of his position as the father of many nations (Gen 11:31; 12:1). Aaron, Moses' brother, had to be a Levite and witness of God's theophany if he were to be a priest and the leader and progenitor of all subsequent priests (Exod 4:14; 19:24; 28:1). Samson was set aside from birth as a Nazirite to become a deliverer of his people from the Philistines (Judg 13:2–25). Samuel's prequalification came in the form of a divine call of endearment¹⁰³ early in life (1 Sam 3:2–21). David's early anointing (1 Sam 16:13) and precocious military skills (1 Sam 17) established his prequalification. Paul's descendancy from Jews on both sides of his family gave his mission to the Gentiles the credibility of his impeccable Hebrew lineage. And, of course, Jesus was prequalified in every conceivable way, from his eternality (John 1:1) to his descendancy from David (Matt 1; Luke 3:23–38) to his Nazarene citizenship (Matt 2:23).

¹⁰³ On the phenomenon of endearment as signalled in speech, see on 3:4.

Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 86.

- Coming right off the command from Pharaoh in the end of chapter 1, male babies of Israel are being cast into the Nile. In verse 2 we read that this child was a fine/good healthy child, and the mom hid him for 3 months.
 - * We later learn that his father was Amram and mother was Jochebed and that they together by faith chose to defy the king's edict as they perceived that their son was beautiful (Hebrews 11:23). Acts 7:20 tells us that he (Moses) was beautiful in God's sight. The Hebrew wording in Exodus uses idiom language to refer to a mother's affection for her baby... thus, rather than saying Moses' parents kept him only because he was more beautiful (and if he was "ugly" that they would have followed the edict) misses the point. Rather, the point is that motherly affection for her beautiful baby stirred them to defy the edict.
- When the time came where hiding him was too difficult, she comes up with the basket plan. Interestingly, the word used for this basket is only used in the Bible in one other place... in Genesis referencing Noah's ark. Thus, Moses in writing this Exodus part of the Torah underscores the point that God saved him through this tiny ark of protection.
- Furthermore, it's interesting to ponder this... the text doesn't specify whether this was a permanent placing of baby Moses in this basket. As one commentator points out (NAC), Egyptian enforcement of this baby killing edict probably took place in waves. So, this could have been a temporary placement of the baby during these sweeps. The text simply doesn't provide these details. But, it does seem that the placement of the basket/ark in the reeds of the bank was in an attempt to conceal him. Also, Moses' sister's involvement in watching from a distance shows that the whole family was involved in this protective plan.
- Verse 4 informs us that this child's sister (later identified in Ex. 15:20-21 as Miriam, a leader in Israel's exodus) stood at a distance watching her baby brother to see the outcome. Now the text doesn't specifically tell us more about this baby's mother... but can you imagine what she went through? As part of the people of God, she knew the midwives' previous bold stance against governmental orders. Yet, through all her people's rising oppression, their people's talk would have been a buzz on how God still seemed to bless them in bearing children. She and all the other moms of Israel no doubt were gravely concerned as they bore sons in recent

days. No doubt there were other moms who were reeling in great mourning as their newly born sons were cast into the Nile River to drown. This mom does all she can to save the life of her son. At some point though, what do you do? Think of what faith and courage it took her to place him in a basket! What was her hope? Surely, she was placing her 3-month son completely in God's hands, and Hebrews 11 bears testament to this faith.

- **Sometimes God allows trials into our lives that drives us to outright reliance on His care where our only recourse is to make some sort of drastic seeming decision, totally trusting Him to come through for us.**
- Well, as the baby's sister (Miriam) watches from a distance, she sees the daughter of Pharaoh come down to bathe at the river. This must have seemed like it was it! I mean the decree came from Pharaoh and now this is his daughter. Well the fate didn't rest solely in man's hands... like Proverbs 21:1 says, "The heart of the king is in the Lord's hands." God is sovereign over this situation and protects this baby boy.
- Pharaoh's daughter is moved with compassion for the child.
- **Even through really dark times in life our God is still working His plan. He protects and He prepares. Don't ever think that He is distant and no longer working His plan. While the world (Pharaoh in this case) tries to do everything to thwart God's plan, hold on to God's promises and purpose.**
- As the narrative unfolds we now see this baby's sister make a bold move in verse 7. Apparently still in the immediate area, this child/young woman speaks up asking if Pharaoh's daughter would let her find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. In the ironic twist of events, the mother now gets to nurse her own baby boy (and get paid for it).
- The agreement is of course to bring the baby back to Pharaoh's daughter after the nursing period ends. While this was of course the agreement that would save her son's life and it was a delight to nurse her own son, I'm sure this handing off of her son was still an incredibly difficult thing to do. Especially when ancient writings suggest that this nursing period likely lasted until the child was 3 or 4 years old. Yet, we see her do just that.
- We should not assume though that Moses grew up never knowing his family though. Chapter 4 suggests that he and his brother Aaron knew each other, and we've already mentioned Miriam's later role.
- God is in the details here... He paved the way of preparation for Moses through bringing him internally into Egyptian governance for a later purpose.
- We learn that the baby's name is in fact Moses in verse 10. The name in Hebrew sounds like the Hebrew word for "drawing up from the water," but the name also in Egyptian is related to the word for "son." How awesome is God's symbolism in calling this servant to use greatly for the redemptive plans of His people... and give him a name symbolic of such... God's people as adopted sons drawn out of Egypt for His purposes!
- **God is always preparing us for His purposes. Maybe you are entering a period right now where you're not sure what He's exactly doing. In life, we need to learn to look at the world not from a self-serving perspective, but a God-serving perspective. In your current situation, learn to ask not "God, why are you allowing this?" but "God, what are you doing in this?" (similar to James 1... asking in faith for wisdom in our trials)**

Vs. 11-15 Divine Preparation When we think We Have it All Together

- The text now transitions to Moses as a man.
- We see Moses coming out to see the oppression of his native people, the Israelites. Upon observation he sees an Egyptian violently beating a Hebrew. The text says that he looked

around to see if anyone was watching. Seeing no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand.

- The question here is whether Moses was in the wrong? Commentators are split on this issue. However, rather than always relying on the opinions of others, let's look at the text of Scripture to shed light on this question.
- Notice in the Exodus text here that it doesn't specifically say that Moses struck the Egyptian down after he had left the Hebrew alone. There seems to be room here to view this scene as an act of defense and rescue over the violent beating. This text doesn't specify.
- We gain further information about this part of the narrative in Acts 7:23-29 and Hebrews 11:24-26.
- The Acts passage uses Moses' attempts at coming alongside the people as their protector in this case of violence as part of string of salvation events that parallel Jesus coming alongside His people as their protector and salvation. Stephen in that sermon declares that Moses' act of trying to save his people was rejected among his people. If we were to look at the entire talk by Stephen we would notice that he rehearses parts of Israel's history all leading to Acts 7:51... underscoring that Israel is a stiff-necked people who "always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you."... Stephen's word of rebuke for Israel's Sanhedrin was that they always reject God's raised up leaders (and this account with Moses, even if it seemed to handled poorly, is one example).
- The Hebrews passage positively speaks of Moses' faith allegiance over his Egyptian upbringing to his Hebrew lineage. By faith, when he was grown up (40 years old according to Acts 7), Hebrews tells us he chose to side with Israel over his Egyptian upbringing.
- Thus, while the Exodus account seems to give little denouncing information regarding Moses' action here, the New Testament does shed a redeeming light on this part of Israel's history. Moses is seen as one who by faith chose to align himself with the Hebrews over the Egyptians, and the New Testament seems to have this tone regarding the Egyptian killing.
- Furthermore, the very next day when Moses sees the 2 Hebrews, the Scripture uses a different word "fighting" instead of "beating". And Moses' response is different as well.
- It seems that the Hebrew that was saved by Moses' actions had spread the word of the event. The next day when Moses tries to break up the fight between the 2 Hebrews, they taunt him about yesterday's killing.
- Now after soliciting the input from the other elders in town this week, they gave some helpful input too.
- Jim added the following:

I think it is interesting that later through progressive revelation God instructed Moses to establish cities of refuge to which a person could flee until they received a trial (Number 35:6ff; Deut.19).

- Kevin added to the discussion from study from an online resource (Blue Letter Bible)...

b. **He killed the Egyptian:** Moses was certainly right in preventing the beating of **one of his brethren**; yet at the same time this was perhaps a premature attempt to fulfill his destiny. Moses tried to make himself Israel's deliverer in a way that made sense to the way man thinks and plans.

i. *Acts 7:23-25* shows us exactly where Moses' heart was: *Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.*

ii. If Moses ever sat down and decided to deliver his people from their Egyptian bondage, he would *never* plan it this way: "My brother Aaron and I will go to Pharaoh with a special stick that turns into a snake. We'll ask him to let us go back to Canaan, and if he says no, we'll bring plagues of blood in the Nile River, frogs, mosquitoes, flies, cattle disease, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness. If all that doesn't work, we'll kill all the firstborn of Egypt and escape across the Red Sea, which will part for us and flow back to drown the Egyptians. Then we'll cross the wilderness and come to Canaan."

- iii. Moses planned the deliverance of Israel the way any man would, and logically saw himself as the key man - because of his accepted leadership among the Egyptians. The only problem was that *God* was going to deliver Israel and use Moses in a way that no man would ever dream of.
- iv. Moses had no idea of it at the time, but he was too big for God to use. Moses tried to do the Lord's work in man's wisdom and power. It wouldn't work. After 40 years of seemingly perfect preparation, Moses had another 40 years of seemingly meaningless waiting to perfect God's preparation.

- Thus, you can formulate your own opinion on this, but it seems to me as we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture that Moses' actions were defensive as he attempted to begin this switch from being raised an Egyptian to walking into God's plan of bringing salvation from Egyptian oppression. However, his attempts at this were rather "Moses-centered" at first. Little did he know that his 40 years of life upbringing in Egypt only served as part of his preparation... in God's plan he still had another 40 years of wilderness preparation ahead.
- **Sometimes in life we think we are just starting to figure out God's plan for us, and then all of the sudden we find out that God has a MAJOR shift for us. But through it all He is ALWAYS preparing and shaping us!**

Vs. 16-22 Divine Preparation in the Unexpected

- When Pharaoh heard of Moses' action of killing, he sought to kill him and Moses fled to Midian. The Midianites came through Abraham's wife Keturah (Gen. 25:2) and lived to the southwest of Egypt. As one commentator writes, "Moreover, the relatively independent and isolated Midianites were just the sort of people to seek refuge among for a fugitive like Moses." Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 98.
 - After Moses' running to the wilderness to escape death under Pharaoh, he finds himself in the wilderness period of continual preparation for what lied ahead. Little did Moses know the extent of this though. God works through Moses' actions back in Egypt to further prepare him in an unlikely place.
 - It is here that Moses defends some shepherdesses at a water trough. These 7 daughters of their father (who was the priest of Midian) try to get water for their father's sheep when a group of shepherds try to drive them away. We see the leadership and desire for justice in Moses again here as he stands up and saves them from the bullying of these shepherds. Moses further then waters these daughters' flock of sheep.
 - In response to his help, their father calls Moses to dwell with them and then gives Moses one of the daughters as his wife (Zipporah). It is interesting that Moses here finds his wife in a similar way or at least location (a well) as both Isaac and Jacob back in Genesis.
 - The text moves quickly to tell us that Moses and Zipporah came together in marriage and sexual union where God blessed them with a son... they named Gershom (sounds like the Hebrew word for sojourner).
 - Although we've already seen deliverance type characteristics in Moses, he now finds himself in a despairing situation... for he has lost good standing with both the Egyptians and the Hebrews. Hence, he names his son after his situation... a sojourner in a foreign land.
- "His circumstances, however, offered no support for any calling appropriate to that character. It would surely require an amazing supernatural action of a sovereign God for this washed-up exile to play any role in Israel's future. Moses knew this, and his statement, "I have become an alien in a foreign land," resignedly confirms it."
- Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 101-102.
- Yet although the situation seemed despairing and Moses didn't see it coming, God still is working his plan in and through Moses. Despite some of this strengths in being a deliverer

and some of his hasty actions, God sends him to this 40-year wilderness to further equip him for the task that lied ahead.

- Furthermore, God working in this way would underscore the true Hero of the Exodus... God and not Moses.
- **Sometimes God allows despairing situations to come our way. Again, we can either despair and keep asking why? Or, we can learn to trust God knows what He's doing and we can learn to ask what God is doing through this situation?**
- **Whatever you're facing right now, ask what God is trying to teach you through this unexpected situation!**

CONCLUSION:

- So, Our God is the God of details. His fingerprints are all over the details of our lives.
- Our God is ALWAYS working His plan and preparing us... preparing us for Christlikeness and preparing us for service in some way.
- Look over your life and see our awesome God preparing you every step along the way... from birth, to your upbringing, to even when you thought you had it all figured out, and in those completely unexpected moments of life.
- In our own personal lives, Laura and I never saw the shift back from Bethel to SBC coming. That was a confusing time in our lives, but it has been a delight to see how God has been in those details... allowing us to play a part in the seminary ministry out there... in teaching and even in SP's recent building project. It's been a privilege too to be an outside voice to the Moravian church out there as they work against a wave of false teaching that continues to spread across the villages. It's also been a delight to be voice in the Bethel Moravian church's search for a new pastor. And it continues to be a great privilege to serve here at SBC and continue learning under the ministry here! Folks, God is in the details! We don't know where God may lead any of us in the future, but we must always hold on to our faith that our God is in the details and is always preparing us!
- Learn to ask the what questions rather than the why questions in your life. Like Moses would learn over 40 years in the wilderness, God still has a plan and He is doing something... even if the "something" is completely different than what you thought!
- Even in the petty small unexpected moments in life too ... like disagreements with your spouse or with your kids... or your finances.... or whatever... BIG or seemingly SMALL, let us ask the what questions... How is God Divinely preparing you?

- And you know, as we gain this perspective, let it massively change and shape your prayer life! May your prayer life take on a greater depth to pray these things in your own life and the lives of others. Get past the superficial and even the health (although we want that), and really pray our Father God works His masterful work of preparation in your or their life/lives.

So, God is ALWAYS at work Divinely shaping and preparing us!
God, give us eyes to see this and hearts to receive this!