

EXODUS

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Exodus 2:11-15 A Mighty Savior

We are continuing our study through Exodus today.

If you were with us over the last couple of weeks, in the story so far, the Israelites have been enslaved by a fearful Pharaoh in Egypt. He wants to reduce their population, so he orders cruel slavery which lasts for generations.

There is zero hope for this people. They are slaves, they have no rights, no wealth, no land, no privileges, and their lives are worth nothing to the Egyptians. When a Jew dies, it's a win for Pharaoh. They need some help from the outside, but who cares about the Jews?

God cares.

So, even though Pharaoh had directed that all Hebrew baby boys be thrown into the Nile, God protected Moses through his faithful mother, Jochebed and his sister Miriam. And when Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses in a little boat in the river, she takes him on as her own son.

And that's where we pick up in Exodus 2:

Exodus 2 11 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" 14 He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

So the story fast-forwards through Moses' years growing up in Pharaoh's house - we know little about his childhood.

But we know this: Moses never stopped identifying with the Jewish people. Twice in verse 11, he calls the Hebrews "his people." So maybe he got to stay in touch with his mom and his family while he was growing up in the palace, maybe he was treated a little differently in the palace because they knew he was a Hebrew baby - he had a Hebrew name, he looked different than the Egyptians. But for whatever reason he knew he was a Jew, not an Egyptian.

And Moses is moved to go out to his people and see their lives. And he sees the brutal oppression and the bitter lives his people are leading. He sees an Egyptian man cruelly beating a Jew, and in response, Moses kills him. He buries him in the sand, thinking he got away with it, but he didn't get away with it.

And now Pharaoh is out to kill Moses. In a moment of anger, Moses has thrown it all away. The riches, the comfort, the education, the influence, the power, all vanish in an instant.

So the quick moral lesson there is control your anger, because you'll throw it all away if you don't. True enough. And in this section of the story and later when the Israelites are about to go into the promised land, Moses' temper and anger cost him greatly.

But there was much more going on here. And we know that because the New Testament tells this story a couple of times with more details filled in.

In the book of Acts, this story was retold by Stephen, a deacon in the early church. He is standing in front of the high priest and the Jewish ruling council. And he is there on trial, because some people had said that Stephen dishonored Moses and spoke against Moses.

So Stephen preaches a sermon to them. And it seemed like a pretty good sermon, but they apparently didn't think so because they stoned him to death at the end of it. (Now you just send emails - Stephen's Monday morning after preaching was far worse than mine.)

Acts 7 17 "But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt 18 until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. 19 He dealt shrewdly with our race

and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. 20 At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, 21 and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

So here's just a little insight on Moses' childhood - he got the best education in the world, and became mighty in words and deeds.

So he was physically strong and well-trained, and he could speak and communicate, he was mighty in his words. So his upbringing gave him all kinds of strength and knowledge and skills.

You could see that God was doing something with Moses. He was being equipped to be a mighty rescuer. That horrible command that Pharaoh gave, to put the babies in the river, was turned around to make sure that Moses would be educated and strengthened and prepared for greatness in the history of God's people.

Acts 7:23 "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. 25 He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

So here's what was going on in Moses heart. He grew up in the palace, the most powerful jew, the most educated jew, he was physically strong, and he had a sense that he was the one God was going to use to rescue them.

Moses could sense that God was uniquely raising him up to be the deliverer. He was the most powerful jew there was, the only one with an education, the only one with influence, and power, and connections, certainly the only one in Pharaoh's family.

He knew he was in that palace at that time for the good of the jews.

And as he is spending time with them and hearing their stories, he is moved by their plight. And he sees yet one more jew being beaten by one more Egyptian, and thinks now is the time. It's time for me to lead these people, lead the revolution, and give these people the salvation they've been crying out to God for. So he kills the man.

And he hides him in the sand so the Egyptians don't find out right away.

Moses is a little like Pharaoh here - trying to accomplish the purposes of his people through secret murder (which was exactly what Pharaoh told the midwives to do.) Moses is a Jew, but he's got some Egyptian in him. He's picked up some of Pharaoh's ways, and assumes that those ways will be what God uses to rescue the people.

And he's ready to go out and rescue the Jews with his strength. He assumes that they'll be eager to have him lead them because he is so strong and well equipped for the job:

25 - He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

He was surprised that they didn't know he was there to save him. So the story goes on:

26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' 27 But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

So Moses is rejected by everybody.

Word spreads so he is rejected by Pharaoh - Pharaoh wants him dead for identifying with these Jews that he is afraid of. So the gentile king doesn't like him, and the Jews don't like him either - Moses, who made you our ruler and judge?

He came to his own people, equipped beyond any Jew for generations, and his own people didn't receive him. He's rejected by Jews and Gentiles alike.

So Moses goes into exile in the land of Midian.

But there was even more to the story.

Hebrews 11 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of

Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

So, when Moses went out from the palace to visit the Jews, he wasn't just popping in for a quick stay, he wasn't just touring the area. He had made a choice to be one of them. He had left Egypt

Exodus 2 11 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people

That going out was a conscious choice to give up all of the sinful pleasures that were his in Pharaoh's house, to give up the wealth of Egypt, to willingly be reproached by the Egyptians for becoming one of the lowest of the low, and to refuse to be called the prince.

The author of Hebrews introduces this whole section by writing:

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Moses believed in God. He believed the Jews were the children of the promise even though they were the lowest slaves. He believed that the God he had never seen was far more valuable than all the wealth of Egypt.

And as a result he chose to sacrifice what could have been his. He was the son of Pharaoh's daughter and would have been treated as god-like royalty if he had stayed in the palace and ignored the slavery of his people. He would have had it good, but chose instead to accept suffering willingly so he could deliver these people. He left Egypt, giving up all that was rightfully his because of his faith in the one who is invisible.

Now if you are a Christian, even if you've never heard the story of Moses, you've heard this story before. The story of one who, though He was the highest king, with no limits, no pain, no weaknesses, no suffering, chose to leave the palace to willingly endure suffering to save his people. But while He was with his people, He wasn't received by them, He was rejected by Jews and Gentiles alike. John's gospel says of Jesus, "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*"

When Paul tells the story of Jesus in Philippians, he tells it like this:

Philippians 2: 5-11 “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This story of Moses going out to save his people is a shadow of the story of Jesus. Jesus came as the true and better Moses, who gave up far more than Moses did, who suffered far more than Moses did, and did so to liberate his people from a far greater tyrant than Moses did, in freeing us from sin, death, and hell.

All of the Bible is about Jesus, all written to point us to our need for a Savior - someone who is one of us and totally like us, but also unlike us in a number of ways. Someone who has something we need - his own power, his own authority, his own wisdom and might and ability to save.

There is really zero hope for us outside of a Savior. We are slaves, we have no rights, no wealth that means anything before God, no privileges. We are the slaves to sin with no hope at all, lives that are bitter as we serve our master. We're totally helpless, and our only hope is some help from the outside. But who cares about the us?

We need one from the palace on high to come and liberate us, and rescue us from our bondage, to lead us out of this Egypt and into the promised land.

And Jesus came as the true and better Moses to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

And every passage of scripture is a call for us to recognize our need for a Savior and to follow that Savior to our freedom.

We are constantly being invited to turn from any hope of liberating ourselves from our greatest problem, and to turn to receive the salvation that only Jesus can provide with his substitutional death on the cross for our sins and his resurrection from the grave.

And it's all a reminder that we don't save ourselves - we don't get out of our mess and to the promised land through our own moral efforts - slaves can't lift themselves up by their bootstraps. They need a liberator. We need Jesus to save us, not just direct us. And if we repent and believe in Him, he saves.

Our problem is so bad that we need a Savior. And Jesus is that Savior. The one faithful one who came to rescue us.

But this is where the story of Jesus and the story of Moses diverge. Moses left the palace in faith. Moses knew he was supposed to be a liberator. But Moses didn't kill the Egyptian by faith. He did that in anger and believing that he was going to save the people with his strength. *He believed it he could use Pharaoh's means to accomplish God's purposes.*

He was going to use his power and fame and physical strength to liberate these people. He was going to save by becoming strong. But Jesus saved by becoming weak. The image of Jesus wasn't perfect in Moses. So something had to happen to him.

Moses had to be broken.

Moses had spent 40 years in the palace becoming strong and capable. But now had to spend 40 years in exile in Midian becoming weak and low for God to use him. Because when God saves, He always saves in such a way that only He can get the glory.

This is what God is after: that His name would be known, that He would be glorified, and that we would all be called to treasure what is worth treasuring, live for what is worth living for, and find our joy the only place it can be found: in a life of worship of God. And so He is out to glorify himself.

Remember **Romans 9:17** **“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”**

In the Exodus story, God was working to make Himself known in all the world. And to do so, Moses had to be thoroughly prepared to be the kind of leader who could not take any of the credit.

Moses was mighty in word and deed, and believed he was ready to rescue God's people. Until he went to Midian. And after 40 years in Midian, Moses was a broken old

man. And then God appeared to him in the burning bush and told him to lead the people out of Egypt. Moses doesn't say, "Of course, I'm strong and educated and eloquent and just the kind of person who can save." When God tells him to lead the people, he says things like:

Exodus 4:1 "Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

Exodus 4:10 "But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

Exodus 4:13 "But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

Moses was confident in himself, but had to learn that, left to himself, his "self" was a liability, not an asset. He was confident in his speech. But now he is slow of speech and tongue. I wonder if throwing it all away like that didn't lead to some kind of nervous breakdown, making Moses a shell of his former self. He was totally sure he was ready to save and that his brothers would follow him, but now he says, "They'll never believe and follow."

A work was done in Moses life so that later this could be said:

Numbers 12:3 "Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth."

Now this is funny because Moses wrote it. But, he wrote it before humility was widely considered to be a virtue. He wasn't bragging. He was saying, "This is what I've become - very very low." Tozer wrote, "'Whom God would use greatly, He will hurt deeply.'" And Moses was strong and confident in himself, but had to be wounded to ever be the healer he was called to be.

When God works, he works through humble people.

Moses willingly left the treasures, but you can pretty easily take the boy out of Pharaoh's house. But its much harder to take Pharaoh's house out of the boy. He had to be taught to be low.

Jesus came and left the treasures and made himself the lowest: a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and he saved not with his sword or his fist or his might, but by

going to the lowest possible place, a lowly criminal's cross outside the city, held in low esteem by people, having nothing going for himself. The ultimate leader was the one who was the lowest.

And for God to use Moses, he had to be brought low, so that when God saves through him, God would get all of the glory.

And this is important for us to remember.

Because we work and pray to see people come to faith in Jesus. To see them get saved. And often, a little like Moses, we believe that it is our strength that will save.

If I could just be eloquent enough and persuasive enough, people would listen. If I looked good enough people would follow.

If we could just make our church experience cool enough and user-friendly enough, and familiar enough, or impressive enough with our show, if we could just fine-tune the experience then we could accomplish God's purposes.

But God doesn't need human strength, human eloquence, human wealth to save and accomplish his purposes.

God doesn't use Pharaoh's means to accomplish God's purposes.

The things that are good gifts from God like strength, wealth, eloquence, position, and influence are good things that God does not need us to have to accomplish his purposes.

In fact, if He were to only use the people who had those things going for them, those people could get all the credit, the work of the Spirit could all be explained away, and God could get no glory at all.

Paul wrote about this in 1 Corinthians. The city was a young, hip, cool, smart city. It was close to Athens, which was the center of wisdom and philosophy for generations. They were among the smartest, most cosmopolitan, most educated people in the world.

And to reach this city, God sent the hunchbacked, nearsighted, beaten and battered, not eloquent or powerful, apostle Paul. He was an uncool guy with an uncool message about a Savior who wasn't cool but died on a backwoods cross in Palestine. Sent to the

cool kids in Corinth.

So the mission did not look like it was going anywhere in Corinth.

But Paul's approach to this city that loved wisdom and eloquence was very different than we might expect. Listen to what he said:

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

He intentionally didn't make the message sound wiser because if he did, it would be emptied of its power.

If we package the Gospel in a way so that it is palatable, we actually damage it in the packaging process so that it loses its power.

Its like if you were going to send a vase to a friend out of town, and it didn't fit in the crate really well so you cut it into a few pieces and packed it into the box. It would get there, but its really not a functional vase anymore.

Paul said that if you repackage the Gospel to make it acceptable to people, it won't be a functional Gospel anymore. It won't work.

So what is it about making the Gospel sound wise and palatable to the culture that kills it and empties it of its power?

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

What is it about making the Gospel sound wise and palatable to the culture that kills it and empties it of its power? Verse 21 gives the answer.

It says, **"In the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom."**

In other words, God designed the way that people come to know God. And it is built into his design that you cannot know God through human wisdom.

God has this plan for people to come to know him. And the way to come to Him is not by being strong in ourselves: being good enough to get to him, but by recognizing our own inability to save ourselves and calling out to Him for mercy.

God has a system for saving people that is built so that nobody who is a Christian has ANYTHING to boast about. He did not send Jesus to create a religion where we could do some good things and make ourselves acceptable to God.

So God devised a way of saving people where man is NEVER the solution, because He wanted it to be a real solution.

Not our works. Not our wisdom. Not our goodness. Just His cross.

So how does he prevent us from coming to God by thinking hard enough and then boasting about how we're smarter than the non-Christians?

He has made it so that our message sounds foolish to those who will evaluate it only by human wisdom. Look at verses 22 and 23:

**22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,
23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,**

So Paul here says that Jews and Greeks alike hate the cross. Jews and Greeks were very different kinds of people.

The Jews really wanted Jesus to meet their standard for power: The real Messiah was supposed to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and overthrow the powers that were enslaving the Jews. "Kill the Egyptian with their fist."

But instead Jesus went to the cross. It was a stumbling block - an offensive thing. A crucified Messiah was an oxymoron just like "married bachelor" or "winning Buffalo Bills."

The two don't go together. So they were offended when they saw a crucified Messiah. They evaluated God by their standards, and if he met their standard - be a powerful

Messiah - they would believe. But He didn't meet their standard, so rather than believing in Him they were offended by Him.

The Greeks didn't want him to overthrow the government. They weren't concerned about power. Their standard was wisdom. They had centuries of writings from great philosophers who attempted to know the divine by using their minds - by wisdom.

So here comes Jesus claiming to be divine, and they said, "Prove it, by showing how philosophically sound your message is." They evaluated God by their standard, which was human wisdom, and if he met their standards, they would believe. And this message of the cross didn't seem very wise

I mean, seriously, we believe some crazy stuff:

1) We believe the universe was created by a being that nobody has ever seen fully. You can't just train a telescope on one spot in the sky and say, "Yes, there's a creator God, there he is, right by jupiter. There, now its confirmed."

2) We believe that Creator didn't want us to stumble in darkness knowing nothing about Him, and that he is **all powerful**. And the **powerful way he reveals himself to us is in a book?** All the power in the universe and the best he could come up with was a best-seller? An infinitely powerful being and his display of power is in a book - one without any pictures in it.

3) We believe a virgin conceived and gave birth to a baby who was a God-Man.

You don't believe this stuff because you're smart.

And that is part of the plan - so that nobody could boast.

And God, in his wisdom, made sure that being smart does not make you more likely to believe the truth about him, so that if you do believe you have nothing to boast about.

A Jew, who wanted a powerful Messiah who ruled and reigned on earth, could not find in Jesus a Messiah who met his requirements. A Greek could not find a wise enough message. God intentionally frustrated their human approaches to God so that they couldn't boast about themselves when they got there and could only give Jesus glory, or "boast in Jesus!"

Notice how these very different people, Jews and Gentiles, had a similar approach to God - We will define what God should be like, what a Savior should be like, what a true Gospel should be like, and if God is a good boy and jumps through our hoops, we'll accept Him.

The problem with both approaches is that any God who will obey man, will jump through man's hoops, who is domesticated and made in man's image, is no God at all.

And if you repackage the Gospel for your culture to make it palatable to them, you make God jump through their hoops, you kill it. It might fit into the box, but there's no life in it anymore.

Now to be sure, Jesus is power and wisdom.

Jesus defeated sin and death and satan by dying on the cross. That's power. It's greater than any military power. Its just not power on our terms.

And Jesus is the embodiment of wisdom.

So what makes that believable? What does it take for someone who wants earthly power to see the cross as powerful? What does it take for someone who wants earthly wisdom to see Jesus as wisdom? Because to the natural eyes, it looks like folly and weakness.

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Paul says there is a special calling of God that goes to the heart of the person who is being saved that causes this message to strike them as strong and wise.

For someone to believe this, God has to work on them first. You can't get to God with your own smarts. You need his divine calling.

So that when you do come to faith in God, God gets all the glory, from the first to the last in your salvation. "Not of works, lest anyone should boast."

So Paul says that God in his wisdom did not make the Gospel sound wise.

And he goes on to say that if you look at the people who he has saved, you see

evidence of this. And this is funny:

25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Paul says, "Look around guys! There are not a lot of winners in church! A couple of you are really smart, but not many. When the church gets together, nobody mistakes it for a meeting of Mensa.

There are not a lot of powerful people. Sure, in America, every politician claims to be a Christian to get votes. But there are really only a few who are.

There are not a lot of super athletes, a few. Not a lot of great rock stars.

Christians, in general, are just weird people.

There just aren't a lot of pro-bowlers on our team. We are the Buffalo Bills.

God didn't look out at the world and say, "I'm gonna save people who really have something good going - the rich, the athletes, the smart." In fact, he usually saves the opposite.

Why?

To shame the wise. So that people who thought, "I'm better than people because I'm wiser," would eventually have to say, "I'm so dumb. I thought I was so wise but I've been rejecting Jesus, who is the embodiment of wisdom."

So that when we come to Jesus it is not through our own merits, but through kneeling before him. So that nobody could boast.

This is a caution and an encouragement for us.

It's a caution because it warns us not to try to make God strong by being strong

ourselves. (That's what Moses was doing, and he had to learn a lesson.)

And it is an encouragement - the power is in the Gospel, not in us, its containers. So we are not too sinful, or weak, or uneducated, or unimpressive, for God to fill with His Spirit and use in the spreading of the Gospel. The weakest are the most likely to be used, and those who think they're strong often need to be broken to be used at all.

God is after His own glory, and He doesn't share it. So for Moses to be used by God, he has to have stripped from him any potential of sharing God's glory. So he is allowed to fall, to sin, to be rejected, to apparently waste 40 years of his life, to break down, to collapse, to come to believe that he wasn't able to do what God had required him to do.

And then he would do it. Because God will always make sure that he is bringing some people low enough so there will be people through whom He can fulfill every promise.

And the lowest, the most broken, was God Himself, broken for us.

Powerpoint:

Call to Worship: Psalm 34:1-3

Exodus 1:12

Exodus 2:11-15

Acts 7:17-22

Acts 7:23-25

Acts 7:25

Acts 7:26-29

Hebrews 11:24-27

Exodus 2:11

Hebrews 11:1

Philippians 2:5-11

Romans 9:17

Exodus 4:1

Exodus 4:10

Exodus 4:13

Numbers 12:3

1 Corinthians 1:17

1 Corinthians 1:18-21

1 Corinthians 1:22-23

1 Corinthians 1:24

1 Corinthians 1:25-29

Notes for Bulletin:

Exodus 2:11-15

A Mighty Savior

- I. The Faith of Moses
- II. The Strength of Moses
- III. The Weakness of Moses

For discussion in small groups:

1. How is it practical that God uses weak things to accomplish his purposes? What encouragement do we get from that?
2. How can we use what we've been given (education, wealth, strength, influence) without depending upon ourselves to accomplish God's purposes?
3. How has God humbled you in the past? What was the result?
4. How have you been too self-reliant for God to show himself powerful in the past?