
The Deliverer Prepared

Exodus 2

Introduction Deliverance is a grand word that inspires weary hearts. Deliverance from a body that is starting not serve us well. Deliverance from hard financial distress. Deliverance from tyrannical government. Deliverance from destructive relationships.

We last left the Hebrew people, mighty and many, under the increasing weight of slavery. Their sons are being slaughtered. Their lives are being made miserable. Their profit of their labor is gone. They are being broken by a relentless attempt to debilitate them and destroy them. Does God care? Will deliverance come? Are God's promises true?

Before we move into this text consider how Exodus mirrors Genesis in an interesting way. At a pivotal point in Genesis, the Gentile Priest, Melchizedek, appears and blesses Abraham. At a pivotal point in Exodus, another Gentile Priest, Jethro, appears and counsels Moses (Ch 18). Thus, Exodus is structured a bit like this:

Taking God's people out of Egypt (1-17)

The Blessing by Jethro (18)

Putting God into the midst of God's People (19-40)

One of the challenges in preaching Exodus is that to cover it well, large sections of text need to be read. I want to encourage you then to read ahead. Each week, at least once during the week, read the text for the following Sunday. We will give you this information in our announcement slides and in the bulletin. Come, knowing what the text says and anticipating the message from the text.

Let us take up the Word of God from the hand of Moses in Exodus 2.

God Brings the Deliverer

(v.1-9)

Acts 7 records for us the indictment, defense and execution of Stephen, the first martyr of the church. In verses 17-22 of Acts 7, Stephen recounts what transpired in Exodus 2. We will be working through this text in stereo, one speaker on the Exodus channel and one speaker on the Acts channel.

In a Godly Family

(v. 1-2)

Even in these difficult and dark days, hearts are entwined with one another, love springs up and a holy marriage takes place. A man and a woman of the tribe of Levi, later identified by name as Amram and Jochabed, married. They had three children, Miriam, Moses and Aaron. Their son, Moses, was born under the vile edict to murder all male babies. Jochabed saw that he was a good and healthy baby. Stephan recounts that he was "beautiful in God's sight." And Hebrews says that "They saw that he was beautiful." In words and phrases like this you hear enduring love and endearing tenderness for this baby.

For three months, she hid him away. By faith, she hid him, not afraid of the Pharaoh's edit. See them holding him in their arms in the quiet darkness of the night. Hear them shushing him and rocking him to sleep during the long brightness of the days. Know their growing concern on how to preserve him alive, believing and trusting in God in an obeying way.

To the Royal Daughter

(v. 3-6)

But there came a day when they can no longer hide him. So they hit on a plan. This act of placing the babies on the river Nile was a common practice in Egypt. But more than that, what is narrated here is intended by Moses to connect the preserving of Moses in an ark to the saving alive of Noah. With loving care and skill, Jochabed wove a basket, a small boat of bulrushes. She lavished on the pitch to make it water proof. She spread his blanket and pressed in his pillow. Then she tenderly laid him in it.

Taking Miriam by the hand, Jochabed went down to Nile. She walked in faith, her daughter at her side, the basket swinging from her hand. She stationed Miriam to watch over and see what happens. She knelt down and touched his cheek and kissed him one more time. Her heart was strong in faith, believing God. She committed him to God's providence and protection. She has obeyed the King. Surely, her son will live!

The sound of laughter and youthful fun rang out as the Pharaoh's daughter and her entourage arrived at the river's edge. She enters the water as her attendants stand guard on the bank. Ah, she sees the basket floating among the reeds. "Quick, one of you retrieve that for me. I want to see what is in it."

Imagine their surprise to open the basket and there is a baby. Probably because the baby was circumcised, she recognized that this is a Hebrew baby. In pity, her heart was captured as well. He cried his way into her affections.

With a Loving Mother

(v. 7-9)

But what to do? This was a tiny baby still needing nursing. As she was schooled to do, Miriam steps up and offers to find someone to take the baby and wet-nurse until weaned. Miriam ran to get her mother, her heart beating fast. "Come, come. Brother has been rescued by royalty. Just as you thought, she has asked me to get her someone to nurse the baby. Come, on mother." With faith and thankfulness, Jochabed returned to the river, received her child back from the Pharaoh's daughter and took him safely home. She kept him at home at least until he was weaned.

God Trains the Deliverer

(v.10)

As we have seen, the boy's upbringing in Pharaoh's court is alluded to in Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin. (Acts 7:21-22).

In the Pharaoh's Household

(v.10)

At a certain age, the boy was taken to the Pharaoh's household and presented to the Pharaoh's daughter. We do not know for certain how old he was. It is probably safer to assume that he was taken as soon as he was weaned. There, he was adopted into the family and became the daughter's son. Clearly, he is portrayed as living in the Pharaoh's household. He may even be seen as a potential future Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's daughter gives him the name, we know him by. Curiously, whatever his parents called him is unknown to us. He was called Moses. His name was a droll play on the word. In Egyptian, it means, "the son of." To the Hebrew ear, it sounded like the word, "To draw out." Can you see the clever smile of his adopted mother? "Come here, my son," she calls to him. The Hebrews are reminded every time he is called that he was drawn up out of the water.

With an Egyptian Education

(Acts 7:21-22)

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. Acts 7:21-22 [ESV].

Stephen reminds us that he was given the finest education available in his day. Language, math, history, science, art, religion were all a part of every Egyptian boy's education. Further, all the boys in the Pharaoh's household were taught to lead and govern. He grew in the skill through the teaching given him. He was well known. His reputation was for being mighty in his words and in his works. He was eloquent in his speech. He was exceptional in all that he did.

If this is so, why, when God called him to his task later, did he try to excuse himself as one who did not speak well? How does he go from the reputation for greatness to the self-perception of inability?

God humbles the Deliverer

(v.11-22)

Having prepared him through by growing up in the Pharaoh's household, God will now prepare him by humbling him. Here is his rejection when he tries to deliver in the wisdom and power of the flesh. Stephen again helps us with this story as he repeats it Acts 7:23-29.

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. 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. Acts 7:23-29 [ESV].

Through His Rejection in Egypt

(v. 11-15)

Forty years passed. Moses hears of the burdens and troubles of his people. He went out to see if it is true. He left the safety and shelter of the palace and walked where his people toiled. Not only did he see their slavery, he saw the pain of it as he witnessed a beating. One of his own people was savagely whipped by an Egyptian. He saw the oppression. He saw that injustice. His heart was stirred by love and mercy. He wanted to make it right. He stepped in to defend his own people. The interaction is hidden from us. We only know that finally, making sure no one was around, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Has the deliverer arrived? Has God through marvelous and amazing providences provided a mighty, influential leader in a position of power and prominence who will deliver his people? At the moment he was prepared for and poised for, he failed. In anger, yes, just anger, but in anger nevertheless, he struck out. He committed murder. That it was wrong is evident by his hiding it. One does not hide a just act; one hides a sin. What will he do, deliver the Hebrews one Egyptian at a time? God's providence has brought Moses to this day. God's providence allows Moses to act in this fashion. God is still preparing the deliverer for another time, another place, another way.

The next day, as he was out and about, he was astonished to find two Hebrews struggling with each other in a dispute. What are they doing? He strode over to see what was going on. One of them was beating the other unjustly and unmercifully. He stepped in and confronted the man who was in the wrong. But his intervention was met with a shocking surprise. "Who has made you our prince and judge over us? Are you to kill me like you did the Egyptian?" He was rejected and he was accused! He was rejected as one of the Hebrews having place and position over them. He was also exposed. People know. His hidden murder was not as secret as he thought. He was afraid.

The Pharaoh heard about what he had done. He issued a warrant for his execution. He set out to find and kill Moses. Instead of becoming the mighty deliverer, respected by his people, bringing them justice and freedom, he had become a frightened fugitive. He ran for his life. He fled south east from Egypt into Midian. There he hid in northwestern part of Arabia near the Gulf of Aqaba. While the exact location of Midian is in question, the nomadic tribes of this period were the descendents of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1-6).

The camera has been panned back to show this powerful man in Egyptian attire fleeing. This is a long journey of many days and weeks. Then it zooms in as he sits down at a well for rest and refreshment.

Through His Sojourn in the Wilderness

(v. 16-22)

Just as the godly priest Melchizedek almost seemed to appear out of nowhere, so also we are introduced to the priest of Midian. We will later learn his name is Jethro. His seven daughters arrive at the same well where Moses rests. They have come to draw water for their father's flocks.

But the idyllic scene was interrupted as shepherds with their own flocks approached the well. They are not going to share with the women. Their flocks

needed attending now. So the shepherds sought to drive the women away from the well. The expressions here portray the intimidation of harsh words and threatening gestures.

Moses will have none of it. He stood up and waded into the evil shepherds. We do not know whether or not there was a real fight or, as bullies often do, they melted away in cowardice in the face a truly strong man. But in a display of true leadership and meek strength, he then drew the water for the shepherdess' flocks.

The ladies returned home to their father way earlier than normal. Their father, as any good father should when he sends his teen-agers on a job and they return way too early to have gotten the job done, challenged them. They told the story of their rescue by the Egyptian stranger. Their father is appalled. That they have not invited him to their home to meet their father, that they have done nothing special for their benefactor was a gross violation of hospitality in their nomadic culture.

Well Moses was found, brought to their home and took bread with them. Jethro (Reuel) gave him Zipporah to be his wife. The brevity of the narrative does not convey the rituals, the happiness and the love that may have flowed. Moses' intent in writing this is to show how he came to be married and have these two children. The point of the narrative is to show the final humbling of the deliverer. He named his son Gershom, which sounds like the Hebrew word for *sojourner*.

This is the path of God's providence for the deliverer of His people. Reared in love, rescued under the threat of death, educated in the finest of the world, loved his own people, stood for justice, killed in defense of his people, fled for his life, defended the young ladies against assault and ended up a traveler, an exile in the wilderness. The once proud adopted son of the Egyptian Pharaoh's daughter is now a lowly shepherd tending his father-in-law flocks. It is a long way from the Promised Land. It is a long way from home.

Forty years will pass. The Pharaoh died. The slavery of God's people continued with growing pain and horror. Moses lives as an unknown nomadic shepherd living in the desert. Where is God in all this? Is help near? Is hope real?

Finally, they cried out to God for help. The sound of their cry comes up to God. They have reached the point that Egypt is no longer pleasant and tempting. They are ready to be rescued from their slavery with its toiling hardship and its everlasting pain. When the deliverer comes, will he find a people who know their plight and want the deliverance God brings?

God hears. God remembers or affirms His covenant with the patriarchs. He sees them. He has seen them all along. He knows their plight. Deliverance will come.

God's providence is often mysterious and always masterful. He guides the events surrounding Moses' birth, rescue and adoption to preserve him alive. But it is also ordered and recorded so that we will see the connection to Noah. We will begin looking for the thematic meaning of "passing through the waters of judgment in the safe ark of God." Our Bibles then open up to us in glorious and practical ways.

Conclusion

God's providence guides our lives. A loving, wise and sovereign God orders the universe according to His purpose and plan. All the chaos of choice, sin, fallenness, destruction, death are all swinging across the dance floor of time and space to the music of God's sovereign decrees. Confessing these truths and submitting to what God allows orients our hearts towards God's great plans and ultimate purposes. Then, we will bear unimaginable groaning with quiet steady grace.

This dramatic time in Moses' life recorded in Exodus is interpreted in Hebrews 11:24-26. The veil of flesh, the shadows of the Old Covenant are taken away. The heart of Moses is revealed. While acting wrongly, he had gone out to see his people out of faith. His moving among his people was not just a passing, fact gathering junket. It was an act of faith that regarded Christ and identified himself with the people of God.

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. Hebrews 11:24-26 [ESV].

Moses reached a point where he had to be identified as either an Egyptian because he was the Pharaoh's grandson or as one of God's people. By default, he could just go on living as he had. Every one knew him as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He had grown up in their house, attended their schools, spoke their language and wore their clothes. But he came to a point in his life where he had to make a choice.

Moses turned his back on palace and throne to choose to be known as one of the slave people (v.25). He turned his back on power, prestige, privilege, position and pleasure to choose to be persecuted and mistreated along with the hated of his society. Now, do you see what kind of choice this was and still can be for us?

The problem for us today is that too many have simply Christianized Egypt. There is no real choice now because the passing pleasures of Egypt are wrongly labeled as Christian. Christians have not turned away from these things but rather are actively pursuing them in their hearts and with their lives.

Make no mistake about this. Sin is pleasurable. Sometimes Christians portray sin in such ways that real people doing real sins simply recognize as false. Sin brings pleasure and satisfaction and delight. Otherwise, there would be no real attraction to it. Choosing to turn away from the pleasures of sin sometimes means choosing to embrace suffering and ridicule and misunderstanding. It might mean bricks without straws and terrible taskmasters and deadly threats to children. And sometimes it means choices that we simply will not make. Often this choice is the one Jesus points to in regards to money. But it may involve sex, or computers or career or sports or children or just spending or keeping up appearances.

What is the fundamental motivation that drives Moses' choice? What would motivate this kind of choice in any one's life? It seems to me that this essential motivation determines which choice we will make. Moses had done some spiritual accounting. He considered or reckoned that humiliation with Christ was more valuable than the treasures of Egypt. He treasured and valued Christ more than the riches of sin and Egypt. This is a potent verse.

- It tells us that men and women and families who choose to pursue the passing pleasures of wealth and privilege and power and materialism and sin do not prize Jesus. Our sophisticated Christianity where simplicity and sacrifice are not valued simply exposes us as esteeming ourselves more than we treasure Christ. What have you ever sacrificed for Jesus? What has loving Jesus and living for Jesus and treasuring Him ever really cost you?
- It tells us that men and women and families who love and treasure and trust Jesus value even disgrace for His Name more than comfort and pleasure and ease. This is what motivates people to leave the comfort of home and embrace the danger and difficulty of mission. It is what drives people to simplify and sacrifice for the sake of Christ. It measures our strength and matures our souls and magnifies our Savior.

Where is faith in all this? How does all this simply not become another manifestation of legalism and works? "He was looking ahead to his reward." He was not gripped by the worth and value of what he was turning away from. He was gazing with delighted desire on a higher and heavenly reward. He treasured Christ. I do not know how clear all this was. It is stupendous that he was driven by treasuring Christ in an age *when there was no Scripture as of yet*. But yet the sacred text tells us that Moses acted as he did because he believed what he did and treasured what he did. Yet, here we are, surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses in the Old Testament and having the full and final Scriptures on our own language and vernacular and we find ourselves besotted with the momentary and the passing.

The ministry of counseling often deals with people who have failed to trust and treasure Jesus and now are in the harvest of sinful choices. Some of you are even this week going to face this crisis. You will have choices to make that will show what you treasure. May God cause us to see the reward that awaits us in heaven. May that treasure be God, Himself.

Notes