

Prepared for a Great Purpose

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[0 : 0 0] Well, it's a story that I'm sure most of you, if not all of you, heard even when you were younger, even in Sunday school. It's certainly a story that I suppose children of a certain generation will have known and known and heard the story of Moses, the baby as we rent there, as we heard the baby placed in the basket in the River Nile, the baby who was protected there by God through his parents, the baby protected from the murderous schemes of Pharaoh. And of course, this story forms very much one of the great dramas of the Old Testament. It's a story that we love to hear and to hear again. But if it's only simply a story from one perspective, as it were, if it's simply just a story of the protection of a baby boy during the time of infanticide in Egypt, if that's all that it is, then surely we're missing the whole point of this, the big picture. We're missing the purpose of this story because it's here for us in Scripture. And of course, it's here to show us, to tell us of the hand of God, not just in this individual Moses, but the hand of God upon his people.

And it's a story here that, again, that tells us of the faith of God's people, even the faith of Moses' parents in their committing to God, their little one. And as we'll see, I pray later, it's a story too that in fact points forward to the person of the Lord Jesus. Again, I pray that we'll see this in more detail as we persevere through this first section of the story of the life of Moses.

It's a wonderful story of, above all, of God in action. It's a story of faith in action. It's a story of faith in the face of all who would seek to destroy God's people. It's a story of encouragement.

It's a story even to encourage you, even in difficult times, to continue to trust in God and put your faith in Him who rules, who's sovereign, who protects His people, who loves His people with that everlasting love. And so we're going to look at the story from different sections, if you like.

And the first section, if you like, is found in verses one to four. The child of faith, or even the child of faithfulness. As we read there in verse one to verse four. And think of the background to what we were reading there. Because the Israelites in Egypt, the descendants of Jacob, are in Egypt.

[2 : 5 7] They've been there for many years. And at the time that this story is written, and of course, Moses, Moses, the author, would write, had written this many years later. But the Israelites are living in the most dangerous of times. Pharaoh's already decreed infanticide, the killing of newborn baby boys. He wants to eradicate the male population of the Hebrew population. He wants to destroy that nation. He sees them as a threat to his own land. He sees them as a threat to his own power.

But as we saw last Lord's Day, last Lord's Day morning, the swift action of two Hebrew midwives in protecting these newborn baby boys saves the people, saves these children. But that, of course, wasn't the only scheme that Pharaoh had to destroy the Hebrew nation. He has the other plan of throwing the newborn baby boys into the river Nile. But as we find out, it's the Nile itself that produces, as it were, the Savior of God's people there in Egypt, the Savior of Moses. Moses, Moses born to Hebrew parents. Because Moses wasn't their only child. There was the elder brother Aaron. There was Moses' elder sister Miriam. But Moses is special to God. Of course, all of God's people are special.

But in a particular way, Moses has been separated by God to be the one who will lead God's people out of Egypt. That will happen, of course, many, many years later. But in this time between Moses' birth and Moses leading the people out of Egypt, God has prepared Moses. God's preparing Moses to lead his people out of Egypt. And even in these three months, God watches over these three months of, first three months of Moses' life, God is watching over Moses. The protection that we've read of, the saving of Moses' life that we've read of. But even in these details of the construction of the basket, the saving of Moses by the Pharaoh's daughter, Miriam being there on hand to help to bring Moses back to his mother. What do these, even these incidents, these details, this, even this very early part of Moses' life? What does this tell us about the hand of God over Moses? What does this tell us about the role of faith in God's protection? And what indeed does this point to the person of the Lord

Jesus? Well, let's think first of all, let's think of the role of faith in the story of Moses' early life. And really for that, we turn to the New Testament. We turn to the book of Hebrews, the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 11, verse 23, said these words, or wrote these words. By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict. Moses, the child of faith. This child of faith. Moses, Moses wasn't hidden out of some kind of panic or some kind of rash action by his parents. No, Moses' parents did what they did in protecting their son. They did it trusting that God would look after their son, that God would deal mercifully with their baby. Now, what that child's name was in his first three months, we're not told.

We know it wasn't Moses. That name was given to him by Moses' daughter, by Pharaoh's daughter. But God knew that child. God had known Moses from all eternity and God would protect the child from the evil of Pharaoh. Moses' parents had absolute trust in God, that absolute faith that God would preserve their child's life, even though they didn't know the details of that saving, even though they didn't know the circumstances by which Moses' life would be fully protected. Someone's put it like this, the outward act of hiding the child. The outward action of saving the child was a reflection of the inward action of faith on the part of the parents. Because the parents, as we see, truly did trust in God. And they trusted him with all their might. And yes, they did reach out in faith. They didn't know what was going to happen next.

[8 : 11] They didn't know how the child was going to, how his life was going to turn out. But they knew he would be saved. Think of Abraham centuries before when Abraham left his homeland, when God called him to leave that homeland. Abraham left by faith. And again, in the same section of Hebrews, we read these words, that Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. Isn't that a lesson even for ourselves in this still very early new part of the new year of 2021? That we continue, that we continue, that we go forward in this year in faith. Because we have that trust in God, that God goes before us. The Eternal One, the Lord of the years, knows what is to happen. What's to happen in your life?

Your life as an individual, your life in your family, your life, our life as a congregation, the life of God's church. God knows. And we trust him even as we, as it were, journey through this new year. None of us knows even what tomorrow will bring. None of us knows the way that God's going to direct our lives. We don't know, I don't know how God's going to direct your life in your service for him. But what we do know is that God is with you. And for you to trust in him and to know that he is the one who loves you, who cares for you, who will provide for you, even in these currently difficult times that we're all facing and living through. We trust him. We trust that his hand is upon his people, upon his church, even as God's hand was upon his people there in Egypt, as God's hand was upon Moses, and God's hand on Moses' parents, Moses' family. Even God's unseen hand directing even the very hands of

Moses' parents and constructing that little basket, even as evidence that God was with them. But what if the link, we mention of Jesus, we mention that this episode, we can say points forward to the Lord Jesus. Well, think of the circumstances that we see here, and then bring this forward to our Savior. Just as a young child of Moses, Moses' life, his life was preserved from the hands of wicked men, even in his very, very, very early, early years. Well, think of the Lord Jesus. In his early years, his life preserved from the evil designs of a wicked ruler, of Herod, Herod who sought to kill the baby boys. And Jesus' life preserved from that murderous threat. Ruler Herod who sought to kill to preserve his power. And of course, Moses' power. Moses was being raised up to be a deliverer for his people, for the people of Israel. And ultimately, the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus, our ultimate deliverer, our Savior.

And even as we, just a few weeks ago, have remembered the birth of the Lord Jesus and God, the Father, sending his Son for us, then even I think we can see the echo here in the story and the deliverance of Moses from the clutches of evil Pharaoh. God preserving the life of Moses to be that Savior, that deliverer for his people. And Jesus, the Savior, raised for our protection, for our deliverance from the oppression of sin. But then secondly, what of the care of God that we see in verses 5 to 10? So we've already seen that the hand of God's been upon Moses, God leading Moses' parents to hide Moses' parents to hide Moses in the river Nile. They place their little baby boy in that basket, that basket made of the reeds of the Nile. They've set Moses in that particular part of the Nile under God's providence, everything working together. This is God deliberately choosing even the particular circumstances of Moses' protection. The Nile very much was a place where, or parts of it anyway, infested with crocodiles. God protecting Moses even from that threat.

And in the providence of God, Pharaoh's daughter coming at that particular moment, and the protection of Moses even through God's providential purposes.

[13 : 35] And there, in that critical time, that critical point in Moses' life, on his own as a child of three months old, Moses being rescued at that right time for his deliverance. Moses in the right place at the right time, rescued by the right person for the right purpose, all under God's care, all under God's provision. You can put it like this, that all the component parts were in place. All the main characters are there. Even Moses' sister Miriam. Moses' sister sent by her mother to keep watch over the child even from a safe distance. All under God's providential care. Not just care of Moses, but care of his people.

And there's the safety of Moses, the deliverance of Moses there in the River Nile again. Very much a component part, a link in the chain that would ultimately lead to the deliverance of God's people.

Some 80 years hence. 80 years of a waiting before that decisive act of deliverance would happen.

Yet all working together for good, for those who loved him. All working together, even within God's perfect timing in all the events that were happening in Moses' life. Even the very actions of this non-believing member of Pharaoh's household. Even these actions, crucial in the deliverance of Moses and the ultimate deliverance, the saving of the Israelites. It's obvious that Pharaoh's daughter, the princess, she didn't share in her father's desire to kill all the Hebrew baby boys. If she had had that same opinion, position, Moses would have, life would have been destroyed. But she had that common grace, even that common grace of pity, the emotion of pity as she heard Moses crying. That pity enough to rescue Moses and for the princess to be willing to hand

Moses back to Moses' sister. And even for Moses' sister to be received and heard and believed that the child would be taken back and looked after and then return some years later. All under God's sovereign purposes.

[16 : 23] All under God's care to ensure that God's people would be protected and rescued. In that great story of redemption. Again, this is a lesson for each one of us.

In your trust in God. In God's care over you. In every circumstance of your life. God has set in place even the very component parts of your life.

Whether it's your life, as we said, as an individual or in a family, our church, our congregation, God has placed these component parts together. These parts that form his providential outworking of his purposes.

And certainly some of us who are older, we can look back and certainly we can detect God's hand upon us even in the years that have gone by. Even in these times, even difficult times and at the time we asked why, we wondered why, why God allowed such and such a thing to happen in our lives.

But then maybe many years later, understanding, knowing why these things did happen. Or if not understanding, certainly trusting, continuing to trust that yes, God placed you and permitted you to undergo these trials and testing times.

[17 : 46] But knowing that they were under his great providence, his love for you. Yes, that you continue to trust in God's all-encompassing goodness.

God working out for you every aspect of your life for your good and for his glory. 120 years after Moses' birth, when Moses was giving his farewell speech to the Israelites, just before they went into the promised land, Moses said these words of faith.

He gave to the Israelites these words of trust. Trust in God, God who'd cared for him and God who'd cared for the people of Israel. He said these words, The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms.

The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms. Moses looked back over his life and could say with absolute conviction that underneath truly were the everlasting arms of God.

And when you look back over your life, will you remember these words? Applicable to Moses, applicable to you, applicable to me.

[19 : 13] Underneath have been and underneath are the everlasting arms of God. These arms of God that have upheld you, that have cared for you, that have sheltered you, protected you, provided for you in all your need and continue to do so.

And so it's for each one of us to call upon God, even in this act of worship, and give him praise and thanks, even for these everlasting arms underneath all who are his.

And then thirdly, we see here in the passage, the calling of a Savior. Verse 10, when the child grew up, she, Miriam rather, Miriam brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son.

She named him Moses because she said, I drew him out of the water. We're not told exactly in the passage, but certainly in the culture of the day, the Egyptian culture.

It was probably when Moses was around nine or ten years of age that Moses actually spent that time with his natural family before he moved on to being with the Egyptian princess.

[20 : 33] In these nine, ten years, Moses would have been cared for, of course, not just physically, but spiritually. Moses would have learned of God.

His parents taught him the things of God, the word of God. He would have been versed in the history of God's ways with his people. Moses being there for these nine, ten years of his life before he was returned, as it were, to the Egyptian princess.

Moses, because it was age, roughly age nine or ten, that in Egyptian, certainly in Egyptian society, the higher ranks of Egyptian society, that Egyptian princes were trained.

Trained in the ways, trained in the ways of leadership, trained in the culture of the Egyptian court. Moses' early years, these early years that we might say the first ten years of his life or so, these were vital years.

These were years that God gave to Moses to shape Moses' life, so that Moses would learn the language of his people. Moses being taught of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[21 : 47] Moses knowing that the one true God is God. Moses would learn how God had led Joseph and Joseph's family to safety, bringing them to Egypt.

God saving not just Moses' family from famine, but saving Egypt from famine through Joseph. And these were early years in Moses' life that were such foundational years.

These years that prepared him to be God's servant, even God's mediator, mediator between God and God's people.

But of course, as we saw in the story, that Moses would, at one time, would have to be returned to the Egyptian princess. And again, this is all under God's providential ruling, God's overruling.

So we read there in verse 10, Moses is legally adopted as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It's the princess that gives Moses his name.

[22 : 49] His name, Moses, probably a sort of hybrid name between Egyptian and Hebrew words. There's Moses. Moses who wrote the book of Exodus.

Moses himself is very silent on these 30 or so years between the time that he left his natural family and the time that he left Egypt, as we're, God willing, see in a few weeks' time.

But while Moses is silent in these interim years, Scripture isn't silent, isn't completely silent. We read in Acts chapter 7, verse 22.

These are the words of Stephen the martyr. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And he was mighty in his words and deeds. So, from these few words, we can learn a lot of these formative years in Moses' life.

Moses would learn the ways of, as we said, Egyptian culture. He would learn the Egyptian language. He would learn how to write with Egyptian hieroglyphics.

[23 : 58] He would learn Egyptian law. He would be trained in military skills. He'd learn the skills of leadership. And, of course, the skills that Moses would exercise many, many years later when Moses led the children of Israel.

In fact, when Moses, many years later, would face Pharaoh face to face and speak to him through his brother Aaron, speak of God's purposes in releasing the Israelites from Egypt.

So, all the training that Moses had in his formative years, his first 10 years or so under his Hebrew parents, and then the 30 years under his Egyptian oversight, all within the perfect plan of God.

Yes, Moses, when he was in the Egyptian palace, would look like an Egyptian. He would sound like an Egyptian. He would speak like an Egyptian.

But, ultimately, he was a Hebrew. He was an Israelite. He was a covenant child of God. All under the hand and guidance of God.

[25 : 14] You see, Moses was exactly where God intended Moses to be at that particular point in his life. And we could say this, that Moses certainly would not have had the skills required to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt had it not been for these formative years even there in the Egyptian palace.

He'd been trained in the things of God by his own parents. He was trained in the skills of men under Egypt. God working in Moses' life.

God working through these circumstances to enable Moses to be that leader, to be that person who would act under God's directing.

Yes, these are years of preparation. The years that Moses has lived through amongst his own parents and then under Pharaoh's daughter.

But years of preparation. All under the unseen hand of God. I'm sure that for even his parents, when Moses was with him these first years of his life, in many ways they would have seemed strange, difficult years.

[26 : 30] Why this particular providence had happened in their life. Maybe in your own life there are times when you may well question God's providence is with you and over you.

Why such a providence even in these... Why such a change even in your own circumstances? Even in circumstances you're living through?

But even in these times, even in this present time, that we continue to see, that you continue to see the unseen hand of God working in your life and working even in the life of God's people.

God is working out his purposes even in our present times. You know, at that time in Moses' life, when he was in Pharaoh's palace, it must have been difficult for Moses.

One minute he's with his own Hebrew parents and then in totally different circumstances. As we said, Moses, in all probability, 30 years in that Egyptian palace.

[27 : 39] It's a long time. And in many ways, it might have seemed a long time in God's silence. Even in these 30 years, the Israelites are still being oppressed.

But God hadn't forgotten his people. God hadn't forgotten Moses. There had to be that time of waiting, that time of training, that time of testing, that time of strengthening of faith in the all-seeing, all-knowing God of Israel.

And I don't think we can overlook the fact that Jesus had a period of 30 years waiting, waiting on earth.

From his birth to the start of his ministry, as we're told in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 3, that Jesus was around 30 years of age when he began his public ministry.

But in these first 30 years of his life, Jesus, in his human nature, Jesus waiting, Jesus learning, Jesus observing, Jesus seeing, Jesus preparing for that time when his three-year public ministry would happen.

[28 : 47] Three years of his preaching, his teaching, his serving before his death, resurrection and ascension. 30 years, yes, 30 years of waiting.

But not one moment in these years was wasted. We're all under the sovereign purposes of God. And if Jesus was given that time of preparation, that time of preparing for his ministry, none of us are exempt then from times that God has given to you in his wisdom, even times of preparation for the work that God's given you to do.

This new year is still in its infancy. This new year, this year may well be a year of waiting and testing and strengthening of your faith, but continue to trust in the all-seeing, all-knowing God, the God of the new Israel, the God of his church.

And those whom God loves, those whom God cares for, God who has compassion over, this is the God whom you trust. And yes, even in this time of waiting, waiting on God, remember God is there.

And God's there for you as God was there for Moses. As God had a plan for Moses, God has a plan for your life. That plan to give you a hope and a future.

[30 : 16] Just as he gave Moses and his people that hope and a future. And so, we're to continue, as you and I, we're to continue to rest in the Lord.

And yes, to be patient in that waiting, that resting. And in that waiting, that time of waiting, use this time. Don't waste it.

Use it to seek him, to seek God, to know God, and to trust in him for your life and for his glory. Amen.

Let us pray. Lord, teach us. Teach us, even in these days of waiting, of preparation, times when you have given us to exercise patience.

May we truly trust in you, knowing that you have given to us every part of our lives, that you have given us these times to wait upon you, to trust in you, to call upon you, to wait upon you.

[31 : 22] For you are the God who delivers, the God who saves, the God who rescues. And so, Lord, we commit to you this time that you have given to us.

May we truly know that these times, even our times, are in your hands. Continue with us now, Lord, we pray. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.