

Pharoah Plots, God Intervenes

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[0 : 00] Found on page 45 of your Pew Bibles.

Last week, Pastor Nick gave us an overview of the entire book of Exodus. So if you weren't here last Sunday, I encourage you to go to the website and listen to his sermon. We're looking at the book of Exodus over the next few months because it really is foundational to the entire Bible.

It sets up the story, the rest of the Old Testament, and it also prepares us for what Jesus will come to do in the New Testament.

Above all, Exodus shows us the character of God, the God who intervenes and instructs and indwells His people. So I encourage you as we journey through Exodus to read along.

Maybe take one day a week in your private prayer time with the Lord to read and meditate on the passage that we'll be looking at the following Sunday or the previous Sunday. There's a sermon card in the pews you can take home with you.

[1 : 15] If that helps you, you can put it as a bookmark in your Bible. Now some of you may want to dig a little deeper in Exodus. You might have questions about the literary structure or the historical background of the book, or maybe you're wondering about the themes and interpretation.

Let me recommend this book called How to Read Exodus by Tremper Longman. There's a couple copies on the bookstall downstairs. If you want to go a step deeper and delve into some of those more complicated questions, let me recommend that book.

It's a great book to go along with reading through the book together. So this morning we're going to read...I'm going to start at chapter 1, verse 7. We read the first seven verses last week, and then our passage this morning is chapter 1, verse 8 to chapter 2, verse 10.

So here we go. Verse 7, but the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly. They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong so that the land was filled with them.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

[2 : 32] Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply. And if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land. Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.

They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Ramses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in all kinds of work in the field.

In all their work, they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, when you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him.

But if it is a daughter, she shall live. But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

[3 : 45] So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, why have you done this and let the male children live? The midwives said to Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.

So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, every son that is born to the Hebrews, you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch.

She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.

Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it.

[5 : 04] When she opened it, she saw the child. And behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.

So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew older, she 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.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where everything just seems to be getting worse and worse? You feel taken advantage of, beaten down, left alone to fend for yourself.

Perhaps you're exhausted by ruthless demands at work. Your reputation is slandered for no apparent reason. Your health is threatened.

[6 : 18] Your children's safety is threatened. Maybe you keep waiting and praying and hoping for circumstances to turn around, but very little seems to change for the better.

Maybe you look around and wonder, Where is God in this chaotic mess? Now, even if that's not your situation right now, many of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world face this kind of seemingly unrelenting oppression regularly.

About a month ago, I got an email update from Syed and Jenya. They were part of our church last year. They live in Central Asia. Here's some of their update. Their own church was recently raided on a Sunday morning by the police.

The pastor had to pay a fine because they teach children in the church. It's illegal to teach any religion to children in their country. He also had to pay a fine for storing some Christian books that were not permitted by the government.

There's a very short list of Christian books that are permitted. Another pastor in their country has been in jail for several months already and still awaiting trial. Most of the other leaders and pastors in the country, they said, are exhausted physically and tired spiritually and always under serious pressure.

[7 : 39] Understandably, many of them just want to leave the country. Some of them have done so when they have had a chance. And many Christians throughout history, not just today, have felt the same way.

About 180 years ago, on a Sunday morning, an 18-year-old boy named Frederick Douglass stood on the shore of the Chesapeake Bay, and he watched the ship sailing unhindered in the distance.

He had never enjoyed such freedom, for he had been born a slave. He had witnessed and endured bloody beatings, physical and psychological torture, at the hands of professing Christian masters.

In fact, his most outwardly religious masters had been by far the cruelest. He had recently found faith in Christ as a teenager. After reading the book of Job, he actually overheard the godly wife of one of his masters reading the book of Job out loud one evening and wondered, who is this man who could say, blessed be the name of the Lord after all that happened to him?

And then he found some free black Methodists, and they taught him the way of salvation in Christ. But on that Sunday morning, he cried out to the god whom he had come to trust and believe in, Oh, why was I born a man of whom to make a brute?

[9 : 02] The glad ship is gone. She hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. Oh, God, save me. God, deliver me.

Let me be free. Is there any god? Why am I a slave? Why am I a slave? That's a question you might be asking when you read this section of Exodus.

Is there a god, and if so, where is he? Because the first thing we see in this passage is Pharaoh's designs for evil. We see three successive and increasingly vicious attacks against the people of God.

First, verse 8 to 14, Pharaoh appoints taskmasters to afflict them with heavy burdens. He enslaves them and works them ruthlessly. Then, in verses 15 to 21, Pharaoh launches a secret campaign, quietly instructing the Hebrew midwives to terminate the life of every Hebrew son.

Third, in verse 22, Pharaoh openly commands all his people to throw every son born to the Hebrews into the Nile River. We go from ruthless enslavement to secret infanticide to public genocide.

[10 : 22] It's terrible, and it only seems to get worse. Now, let's look in more detail at Pharaoh's designs for evil, his three evil designs.

First, verse 8, Now, there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. Now, the story of Joseph, for those if you're not familiar with it, it's found at the end of the book of Genesis in chapters 37 to 50 of Genesis.

Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons. Once, he became a high official in the Egyptian government, and he brought his whole family down to Egypt in a time of famine. With the Pharaoh's permission, Joseph settled his family in the land of Goshen.

They were given property of their own in that district. So, for many years, the children of Israel were protected by the agreement that Pharaoh had made with Joseph. They made their living as farmers and keepers of livestock.

But this new Pharaoh had forgotten, intentionally or not, that agreement. See, the promises of Pharaoh, unlike the promises of God, were subject to change from one generation to the next.

[11 : 32] And so, this Pharaoh had no loyalty to Joseph and the children of Israel. On the contrary, he perceived and portrayed them as a threat. But, verses 9 to 10, this is sort of a speech to his cabinet.

And Pharaoh says, These are outsiders. They are prone to ally with our enemies and either run away, or possibly that word escape could be translated take over our land.

Now, some of you might be wondering, who was this new king of Egypt? Scholars have spent a lot of time researching and debating this question because Exodus doesn't name any of the pharaohs it describes.

Some scholars think this pharaoh was a man named Thutmose III in the 15th century BC. Others think this pharaoh was Ramses II in the 13th century BC. One of the cities in verse 11 is named after him.

Those are sort of the two main theories out there. I don't have time to go into all the details, but I'm happy to discuss that. Tremper Longin's book goes into some detail about that historical background. But some skeptical scholars have said instead, Exodus doesn't name the pharaoh because it's just a fairy tale.

[12 : 46] It's a nice story, but it probably never happened. After all, we don't have any evidence outside of the Bible for the Israelites and their exodus from Egypt.

But there's actually a very good reason why the pharaohs are never named in the book of Exodus. Not because they never existed, but because in the ancient Near East, referring to someone by name, especially in a written document, was a way of honoring them and preserving their memory in high regard.

In the first five chapters of Exodus, there are three groups of people who are mentioned by name. Jacob and his family, at the beginning of chapter 1. Moses and his family, throughout chapters 2 to 4.

And the Hebrew midwives in verse 15 of this chapter. We'll get to them in a bit. And then most prominently, the Lord reveals his name in chapter 3. That's sort of the biggest deal of all.

Exodus doesn't name the pharaoh, not because he never really existed, but because Exodus isn't written to give honor to the pharaoh. There's also a very good reason why we don't have any other historical records that tell the story of the Exodus.

[13 : 57] For one thing, even today, 90% of the population of Egypt lives very close to the Nile River. It's a wet region. We have very few ancient documents from that area because they don't preserve well.

And furthermore, ancient Egyptian historians, like most other ancient historians, were notorious for recording the high points and the victories and the glories of their nation. They tended to ignore and overlook and never write about the defeats and embarrassing moments.

Why would they write about this people who grew up within their land and then successfully left? And Pharaoh tried to pursue them and a bunch of Pharaoh's army was drowned in the Red Sea. That's about the most embarrassing story you can come up with.

You see, among ancient literature, the Bible's unusual because it tells the story of a people, but it doesn't hide their flaws. It doesn't overlook their failures. It doesn't deny their embarrassing moments.

In fact, we'll see one of those failures of Moses himself next week, later in chapter 2. So there's no need to be intimidated when skeptical scholars claim that Exodus has no historical basis.

[15 : 10] It's entirely reasonable to affirm, as traditional Jews and Christians always have, that Exodus describes real events that happened in history. Now, that's a bit of an aside. Getting back to the story, the people of Israel find themselves in a bad situation.

Instead of being under Pharaoh's protection, as they were during the time of Joseph, they are now under his suspicion. Instead of making a living independently as keepers of livestock, they are now slave laborers building Pharaoh's military empire.

That word store cities in verse 11 could also mean fortified military settlements. Some of these cities had large temples and palaces and government buildings, and these are the ones that they were building.

And Pharaoh's strategy here is not only to use the Israelites to move forward his building projects, but oppress them as a means of population control.

All right, practically how might this work? Well, you take the men away from their families, send them away to build these store cities. That at least hinders the reproductive abilities.

[16 : 19] The farming and livestock back home might suffer because fewer people would be around. There'd be a lot of work and fewer people around to take care of the animals and cultivate the land. Then you work the men ruthlessly, and they'll eventually get weak and sick and gradually die off.

That's what Pharaoh's up to. Verse 13 and 14, the word work is repeated five times. One commentator said, each word in verse 13 and 14 is like another blow from a slave driver's whip.

They ruthlessly made the people work. They made their lives bitter with hard work. In all kinds of work. In all their work. They ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

And these verses are not an exaggeration. We do have an ancient Egyptian document that describes the cruelty of Pharaoh's officials when they came to inspect those who were seen as Pharaoh's slaves.

Here's an excerpt from it. The scribe, that is the Pharaoh's official, surveys the harvest. He's coming to inspect a farmer who owes him some grain. Attendants are behind him with staffs, Nubians with clubs.

[17 : 35] Give grain. There is none. The farmer is beaten savagely. He is bound, thrown in the well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence.

His children are in fetters. This is the kind of ruthless cruelty, senseless discrimination that the Israelites were experiencing.

And that was only the beginning. Verse 15, it gets worse. Pharaoh summons the Hebrew midwives. Most likely these weren't the only midwives, but rather the head ones.

He says to them, when you serve as midwife to the Hebrew children, to the Hebrew women, see the child being born. If it's a son, kill him. If it's a daughter, let her live.

Now notice, this was not a public campaign. It was a private directive. Pharaoh says, nobody else needs to know about this.

[18 : 40] You could probably just strangle the baby boy as he comes out of the womb. The mother might not even know the difference. Besides, perhaps he phrases it this way, what hope did a Hebrew boy have for a good life?

He would just grow up to be a slave and be worked to death. Perhaps it would be merciful not to bring such a child into the world. Of course, if Pharaoh lived in the modern world, he could have done it all even before the babies were born.

require a blood test toward the end of the first trimester and based on the results, counsel the mother to abort. In Iceland and Denmark, 98% of babies diagnosed with Down syndrome never see the light of day.

The United States is probably closer to 70 or 75%. Evil comes in many forms, whether it's racism and slavery or hostility toward immigrants and separating them from their families or killing off the weakest and least noticed ones through abortion or physician-assisted suicide.

Most of us here would readily recognize slavery, infanticide, and ethnic cleansing as evils. But evil always presents itself deceptively as something good, rational, acceptable, perhaps necessary.

- [20 : 16] Verse 22, Pharaoh makes a public proclamation. Every son born to the Hebrews throw into the Nile. We hear that, and that sounds, rightly, horrendously evil.
- But in Egypt, the Nile River was worshipped as a god. The giver and taker of life it was recognized as. And so Pharaoh's decree might well have been presented with a religious justification.
- The Nile is summoning Hebrew boys. If she does not receive them, our whole nation will be under her wrath. Might have sounded a lot more plausible than it would to us.
- What makes evil seem good or acceptable, then or now? It's the idols that we worship and cherish. In the ancient world, the nation and the tribe were the prevalent idols.
- That's what Pharaoh appealed to in verses 9 and 10. Those idols haven't gone away. In the modern world, we have another idol.
- [21 : 26] It's called personal autonomy. The freedom to do whatever I want with my own body. And that idol, like every other idol, distorts our perspective.
- And it makes us think that all kinds of dehumanizing and destructive behaviors are not that bad after all. Or even pretty good. You know, education alone doesn't rescue us from this danger.
- Adolf Hitler came to power in one of the best educated and most technologically advanced and culturally sophisticated nations of his time. And he followed the same general pattern as this Pharaoh.
- From anti-Semitic rhetoric to increasingly restrictive policies around work to secret plots to open violence. Pharaoh's evil designs have been repeated over and over in the course of history on small and large scales.
- Because they're not just Pharaoh's designs. Behind Pharaoh's designs were the designs of Satan himself. Whom the Bible calls the father of lies.
- [22 : 43] The enemy who seeks to steal and kill and destroy. You might say, where do I get that idea that Satan's behind this? Revelation chapter 12.
- Revelation gives us a glimpse into some of the heavenly and spiritual realities behind earthly events. And in Revelation 12, there's a vision of a dragon who is identified as Satan, who is seeking to devour the male offspring of a pregnant woman.
- The woman represents the people of God. The point is, behind Pharaoh and Herod, Hitler and Stalin, all of the tyrants who dehumanize and persecute God's people and all of the people with a lot less power, but who still try to do the same things, is Satan himself.
- The Apostle Paul says, we are not unaware of Satan's designs. We should not be unaware of them. That's the first thing we see this morning, and it's quite sobering.
- Pharaoh's and Satan's designs for evil. But we also see a second thing in this passage. We see God's intervention for good. Now, God's intervention for good is not evident at first glance.
- [24 : 04] You read through this whole passage, there are no words spoken by God, no prophetic encouragements, no wise explanations for why things are happening the way they are.
- Now, if you go back to Genesis, in Genesis 15, God spoke to Abraham and said his descendants would be enslaved and mistreated in a country not their own, but then he would be faithful to them and bring them up out of it.
- And in Genesis 46, God had spoken to Jacob and said, don't be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you there, and I will also bring you up again.

But that was hundreds of years ago. Most likely, at least some of the children of Israel had passed down these promises from one generation to another, but for so very long, God was apparently silent.

And it might have seemed that he was nearly absent. There's only one action explicitly ascribed to God in this narrative in verse 20 and 21.

[25 : 09] God dealt well with the midwives. Verse 21, and because the midwives feared God, God gave them families. God allowed two midwives, presumably older and previously infertile, to have children of their own.

You might say, well, that's nice for them, but it doesn't do much good when a people are enslaved and on the brink of being slaughtered. But here's what I want to say.

Even though it doesn't seem like it at first glance, when God is present and active and working out His plans for good in every part of this story. When we take a closer look, we see that God is intervening for good and undermining each of Pharaoh's evil designs.

So let me show you how God is intervening for good in each of these three situations. First, in the midst of oppression and slavery, God causes supernatural growth. Verse 12, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad.

Now that sentence is not what you would expect in the rest of this paragraph. What you would expect this sentence to say is the more they multiplied, the more they were oppressed.

[26 : 25] That would be very natural. It's happened over and over in all kinds of places in history. An immigrant population grows more rapidly than the majority culture. Majority culture feels afraid and threatened.

Those people are trying to take over our country. They're moving into our neighborhood. Verse 12, the Egyptians were in dread in fear of the Israelites. That is all totally natural in a fallen world where human pride and fear rule the day.

But the first half of verse 12 is not natural. It's describing a supernatural intervention of God. God, the Creator and Redeemer, is blessing His people with overflowing and abundant life even in the most humanly unlikely circumstances.

And you know, this pattern has often been repeated in the history of the church. Through periods of affliction and persecution and opposition, Jesus in supernatural and unexplainable ways grows His church.

You can see it in the New Testament. One example, 1 Corinthians 16, 9, the Apostle Paul wrote, I'm staying here in Ephesus because a wide open door for effective work has opened to me and there are many adversaries.

[27 : 45] In the early church, Tertullian, I think it was Tertullian, said, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The Roman emperors put Christians to death, but the church kept on multiplying and spreading.

We can see it in the modern world too. Just one example, China became a communist nation in 1949 and all the Western missionaries were expelled.

At that time, there were about four million Chinese Christians. But despite intense persecution at times and ongoing legal restrictions, there are by some estimates 50 to 100 million Chinese Christians today.

The church has grown and flourished in the midst of oppression and persecution. Let me say to you, if you are experiencing spiritual attack and oppression, it usually means one of two things.

One possibility is that you are engaged in a pattern of sin that is giving the devil a foothold, an ongoing foothold in your life, and you're not repenting of it. And if that's you, you need to repent now, today.

- [28 : 55] Don't delay. But the second possibility is that you're experiencing spiritual attack because you're doing something right. You're seeking first the kingdom of God and the devil is not happy with that.

And in that case, you need to know that in the midst of affliction, God causes supernatural growth in ways that you will not even be able to explain. In the kingdom of God, suffering and joy, oppression and growth are not opposites.

They often come as a package deal. One of the reasons God brings affliction into our lives is so we don't get too comfortable here in this world. It makes us look up and call out for our Savior.

And when we call out to Him in the midst of being oppressed or opposed or attacked, His grace is sufficient.

Christians throughout history can testify to it. People here in this room can testify to it. His grace is sufficient for you in your weakness when you feel attacked and opposed and oppressed.

- [30 : 09] Don't be afraid and don't be discouraged. God brings supernatural growth even in the most unlikely and hard circumstances.

That's the first way we see God intervening. The second way we see God intervening for good is through courageous women who fear God more than man.

Now notice throughout this passage the primary focus of Pharaoh's attacks is on the Hebrew men and on the boys who would one day grow up to become men.

Satan seems to try different tactics in this regard. In the Garden of Eden he focused his attack on Eve and successfully undermined Adam and their marriage in the process.

But here Satan takes aim at the men. Practically speaking Pharaoh knew that if he could get the men of Israel out of the picture then the women and children would be more vulnerable.

- [31 : 13] And spiritually speaking Satan knows that if he can get the men of God spiritually off track that the church as a whole will be more vulnerable. And Satan has often been successful in his attempts to spiritually enslave and oppress Christian men.

Men just as Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites physically Satan wants to enslave you spiritually. He wants to make you a slave to lust and pornography and self-gratification.

He wants to make you a slave to your ambition and your work so that you have no time or energy for the worship of God. He wants to make you a captive to anger and rage.

He wants to isolate you from intimate friendship with your wife and from genuine fellowship with your brothers in Christ. He wants to keep you perpetually immature and noncommittal.

A boy who can shave and drive but who can't make and keep promises. Men we are under attack. Let us not be unaware of Satan's schemes.

- [32 : 35] If Satan can disable us spiritually the women and children in the church will suffer and bear the burden. But there's good news because we have something that the men of Israel didn't yet.

The men of Israel could not protect or save themselves from Pharaoh's oppression. They could only wait for God to raise up a Savior which he would. But our Savior has come.

Our elder brother Jesus Christ has conquered sin and death for us. We do not need to be enslaved and oppressed by Satan anymore.

So brothers live in the freedom for which Christ has set you free. Resist the devil and stand firm in your faith. faith. But what we see in this section is that when the men of God are oppressed and when the boys are threatened God raises up women of courage and faith who fear God and don't give in to the pressures of the world.

Verse 17 the midwives feared God. They did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them but let the male children live. Now the midwives had every reason to be afraid of Pharaoh.

[33 : 57] He had absolute power over them. They had no legal protections, no court of appeal, but they recognized that there was a higher authority than Pharaoh. They feared God more than they feared the king.

They were like the apostles in the book of Acts who said we must obey God rather than men and God blessed the obedience of these faithful women. Pharaoh summoned them, verse 19, to ask why aren't you following through with my decree and they had a ready answer.

Now people have debated were they telling a lie? If so, was that okay because Pharaoh was because innocent lies were at stake or did God do good to them in spite of their lie or was there some truth to what they said even if it wasn't the whole story.

Maybe the Hebrew women really were more active and involved in their labor while most Egyptian women just laid back and waited for the midwife to tell them what to do. Who knows?

We don't really know. Perhaps the midwives conveniently arrived late after having given prior instructions to the expectant mother and another woman nearby beforehand. Right? Perhaps it's a clever answer but not necessarily false.

[35 : 12] We may not know with certainty how to interpret their answer but Pharaoh seems stymied by it. He doesn't punish them and verse 20 seems to indicate that God was pleased with their answer too.

So God dealt well with the midwives and because they feared God he gave them families of their own. At the macro level that may seem like an insignificant thing but God is not just concerned about macroeconomic trends.

He's also concerned about the small people. He's concerned about your individual life. If you've been trusting God through infertility or unwanted singleness it's no small thing if God provides you with a spouse or with a family through childbirth or through adoption.

God is faithful and merciful to women like the midwives who find themselves hard pressed with no one to protect them and they stand firm and fear God more than they fear men.

God honors these midwives obedience not only by giving them a family of their own but he bestows upon them the honor of being named and having their names preserved in God's very own word.

[36 : 24] Shiphrah and Puah verse 15 we know their names. We don't know the pharaoh's name. Scholars will debate that forever but we know their names and we know that God named them because God is honoring their faithful obedience.

Like Mary who poured ointment on Jesus' feet and Jesus said wherever the gospel is preached what she has done her sacrifice will be recognized. Her story will be told in memory of her.

So women stand firm in Christ even if you have nobody else beside you. You have Jesus and he will make you strong. So in the midst of oppression God brings supernatural growth.

When the men and boys are threatened God raises up women of faith. And third, the third way we see God intervening for good is delivering the baby who would one day deliver his people.

Chapter two, the focus of the story narrows. We've gone from all the people of Israel to the midwives of the Hebrews to a three-month-old baby. His parents had hidden him as long as they could.

[37 : 30] His cries had become too loud most likely. If he was found in their house, that would be it. And so his mom made a covered basket. The word basket is actually the same word translated ark in Genesis chapter six in the story of Noah.

She placed the ark by the reeds on the side of the river. She wasn't abandoning him. She wasn't turning her back on him.

The basket was in the reeds. It's not going to float away. And Moses' sister was stationed there to watch carefully. It's probably a common place where women came to wash their clothing and bathe in the river.

Some people have even compared it to leaving a baby on the doorsteps of a hospital. Somebody will likely take care of it if you are unable to. Perhaps she planned when the coast was clear to come back and nurse him.

We have no idea. Furthermore, she had technically complied with the king's edict. The letter but not the spirit.

[38 : 45] Now, nobody knew it then, but God's redemptive plans, not just for the people of Israel but for the entire world, were hanging on a helpless baby in a homemade ark. God's plan of redemption starts in unexpected places.

A baby lying in an ark. A baby lying in a manger. Sometimes God's redemptive plans seem to hang on a very thin and fragile thread, but the hand that holds that thread is a strong and steady hand, and if you have turned in faith to Jesus Christ, if you have cast yourself and your future on him in your weakness and your fragility, the same hand that was holding on to Moses is holding on to you, and he won't let you go.

How does God deliver Moses from the water again? In an unexpected way, by the hand of Pharaoh's own daughter. She wasn't a fellow Hebrew. She couldn't personally sympathize with their precarious social situation.

She had little to gain and everything to lose, but she had compassion. She didn't abandon the baby but adopted him as her own. She even paid his mother to nurse him. You see, she doesn't treat the Hebrews as slaves.

She paid for child care out of her own pocket. She put herself at risk to raise this child.

[40 : 12] Now, you might ask, wouldn't Pharaoh have gotten word of this? Well, one Pharaoh was reported to have 200 children, including 111 sons, and 59 daughters whose names are recorded. So, the vast majority of Pharaoh's children probably would not have seen him very often, but still, it was a risk.

What we see in Pharaoh's daughter is this. God's salvation is for people from every nation of the world. No ethnic group is excluded. Maybe you, like Pharaoh's daughter, come from a family that is completely opposed, most, as Pharaoh was, to Christianity, to God's people.

But there's a place in God's kingdom in His family for you, as there was for Pharaoh's daughter. She named the child Moses. Moses was a common Egyptian name.

It simply means son. But verse 10 points out that Moshe also sounds like the Hebrew mashah, to draw out. The one who was drawn out, delivered from the waters of the Nile, would one day grow up to deliver God's people through the waters of the Red Sea.

One commentator put it this way, this child, once doomed to death by Pharaoh's decree, would become the very instrument of Pharaoh's destruction and the means through which all Israel would escape, not only Pharaoh's decree, but Egypt itself.

[41 : 34] Do you see? Every evil design of Pharaoh, God intervened for good. When the people were oppressed and enslaved, God supernaturally grew them.

When the men and boys were under attack, God raised up women of faith. And when the Pharaoh summoned every Egyptian to throw every Hebrew son into the Nile, God in his providence delivered the one who would one day deliver his people by the hand of Pharaoh's own daughter.

Everything that Pharaoh intended for evil, God turned for good. That's the message of this passage. We see it right here, and we see it in the life of Jesus even more.

As a baby, he was threatened by King Herod who wanted to kill him. In the desert, the devil tempted him. In the garden, he was betrayed by one of his friends, and on the darkest day of all, he was nailed to a tree, and he hung on that tree, and he cried out, and there was no answer.

But every one of Satan's designs for evil, God turned for good. Jesus was delivered from the wrath of Herod. He resisted the devil's temptation, and therefore overcame him. He remained loyal to his followers, even when his followers weren't loyal to him, and on the cross, he took our sins away, as far as the east is from the west.

[42 : 54] And on the third day, he triumphed over sin and death in his resurrection. Brothers and sisters, that's why we can be confident that God is present and active in our lives, and in this world, even when it doesn't seem like it, even when he seems to be silent for a really long time and only active in the smallest ways, we serve a God who takes what was intended for evil and turns it to accomplish his good and glorious and saving purposes in the world.

We're about to come to the Lord's table, where we remember the death of Christ on our behalf. And we can remember that there, what God, what Satan intended for evil, God intended for good.

And as we take the bread and the cup, we take them in faith. We offer to him our lives, that he might use them for his good purposes. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that what Satan intends for evil, that you turn for good. We pray that you would give us faith, hope, and love.

Pray that you'd nourish us as we receive the Lord's Supper this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.