



God Hasn't Stopped Working

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Exodus 1:8-22

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⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² 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. ¹³ So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves ¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ "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." ¹⁷ But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" ¹⁹ 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." ²⁰ So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²² 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."

(Pastor Prays)

It's hard to trust God when you don't see God. It's hard to know God when you don't hear God.

It's hard to believe God when you haven't actually experienced God. The good old days are

gone. It can feel like that. The good days are gone, like there's nothing but trouble ahead. There is this overwhelming sense of dread or sorrow or boredom, and it's easy to wonder, is God still working when the great days, the highest point, the halcyon days of happiness seem like they are such a long time ago. I mean, that certainly has to be how God's chosen people are feeling in this passage. So we need to read it all because this passage is a setup for Chapter 2. This passage gives us the back story of how Moses, who is a Hebrew, would be raised as an Egyptian and would then lead God's people out of slavery. But before we get to that, over in Chapter 3, we have got to deal with a setup, with the heartbreaking back story of God's people shuffling through suffering. How do we handle this smothering feeling of being drowned? We look over here to the people in this passage and we see...

God is Still Working, Be Faithful and Trust

Let's go back to the passage. I'm going to start at verse 8. It's a long passage, so we will spend a considerable amount of time walking through it, and then I will come back and make some application. Join me there in verse 8. I want you to know the Bible. What does Moses tell us in verse 8? Now, there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. This is written as a corner. We have come around the corner, and there's a vast political, ideological, and social shift in Egypt. The people of God used to be loved, valued, respected. This is written as if you know that back in Genesis, Joseph was in the dungeon, but he was called up because Pharaoh had a dream and he couldn't interpret it. Joseph interpreted the dream. He let Pharaoh know that Egypt is going into a famine. There are going to be years and years of famine, and he tells Pharaoh, you need to store things up. And so Pharaoh says to Joseph, you be the Prime Minister, and that puts Joseph second in command to the most powerful man in the world at the time. Joseph is Prime Minister in Egypt. Pharaoh finds out that Joseph has a family. Jacob comes in with the 12 brothers. They are there, and they are given the land of Goshen, and they are well thought of. When Joseph's father dies, Pharaoh weeps.

The people of God are loved. But, as they grew and expanded, it became problematic for the people of Egypt. We find that down verse 9. ⁹*And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. We must have some sort of population control. We've got to do something to get a reign on these people. Verse 10 says, ¹⁰Come, 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.” . Here's what the Egyptians were thinking. If the Assyrians come down to make war on us, those several 100,000 Israelites, who are not Egyptians, will join with them and then overrun us. We've got to do something. So here comes the population control. There are going to be three stages to this. The first stage involves verses 11-14. And then the second stage is private infanticide, killing the boy children. You'll find that in verses 15 and 16. And then, in verse 22, is the final solution. ²² *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.”* It's widespread, kill the babies.

The first solution is to make them slaves. So you find that in verse 11. ¹¹ *Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.* So, what you have right here is ethnic hatred of the Jews. If you like to read about history, you can go back less than 100 years ago to World War II; this is sort of what's going on in Nazi Germany. If you were Jewish, you were set apart, and the Jews became the scapegoats. They started to be hated, and the propaganda kept ratcheting up in Nazi Germany until there was a final solution to killing them all. That's where this is going. This propaganda will lead to ethnic genocide. So you find that in verse 11, it is to set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They are no longer free people in Goshen. They now are slaves. And Pharaoh intended to keep the population under control.

But look what happens in verse 12. ¹² *But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied.* Remember the command God gave Adam and Eve, and then again in Noah. Then, we saw it again in Chapter 1 of Exodus. It is to be fruitful and multiply. So now Pharaoh's plan has backfired; the more you push on them, the bigger they become. The story of God's people is the more they are oppressed, the more they multiply. What he has meant for evil, God has intended for good. The plan backfires.

You know, you can see this in China. The church, that is illegal in China, has gone underground, and now there are millions of Christians. So the first stage backfires, it's not going to work, so Pharaoh thinks, let's find another way to do something with these Israelites. You find that in verse 15. Pharaoh ratcheted it up. It's a private, sinister plan. It is providential that this passage has fallen on the Sanctity of Life Sunday. It is part of why we are pro-life and believe that life starts at conception. Verse 15 is anti pro-life. Look what Pharaoh says in verse 15. ¹⁵ *Then the*

king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah. You have two of them. I'm guessing that they're not the only ones. With several 100,000 people, the birth rate would be too high for two midwives to service all of the population. I'm guessing they are like the head midwives. They're the two in charge of the other midwives. Either way, they are brought in front of the most powerful man in the world at the time and look at the instructions in verse 16. ¹⁶ *"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."* The birthstool is literally sitting on the two stones. I'm not sure how the whole thing worked, but when you see them get ready to have the baby on the birthstool, if it's a little baby boy, you kill that baby boy, and you let the daughters live.

Now you understand that what you have right here is the very first picture of infanticide. This makes us think of what Herod did when Jesus was born in the streets of Bethlehem. This reminds us of every warlike society that wants to take over another society. The way you do that is you get rid of the men.

This is the war on boys that was fought thousands of years ago. It's a war on boys that is fought right now. It is a society that has sought to stifle the boys. And we, as a church, ought to do all we can to celebrate and to promote and point our boys to being godly men because the world outside is not doing that. The world outside is Pharaoh. He calls on the midwives to do it privately. You see that in verse 16. So you go there, and the baby's going to be born; your job as a midwife is to deliver that child. You are there so you could have that baby be born, and you killed that little boy, and the mother won't even know you've done that. You can just say it's a stillborn child. So this is the second wave to have this infanticide done privately so that there's not widespread panic.

After Pharaoh has said that, he didn't know who he was dealing with. Do you see it? ¹⁷ *But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.* What you have right here are the very first two heroic women who start the pro-life movement. These two women have a conscientious objection. Here, you have someone fearing God more than fearing the government. I find it remarkable that archaeologist historians, Egyptologists have never been able to come up with the name of the pharaoh that was in power during the exodus. He was the most powerful man in the world, and we wouldn't

even know his name. And yet we have these two midwives named. They are the heroes that feared God. And what's interesting to me is that we don't know if these two were even Hebrews. They certainly didn't have a Bible because Moses hadn't written the Bible yet. They hadn't heard from God. The text just says that they know this is not right. Here is an instinctual natural law reaction. You want me to kill baby boys? They're not having it. The midwives feared God, and somehow, or other Pharaoh found out that they're not carrying through with what he told them to do. I don't know if he's got scouts or seeing all these boys running around, but somehow he knew. He called the two head midwives in front of him. ¹⁸ *So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?"* Well, the truth is, what had they not done? They were not killing the little boys. Why have you let the male children live? The midwives know they're in trouble. They're in front of Pharaoh. If they don't do what he said, they will be killed. These midwives, throughout history, have gotten in trouble from the church. Augustine said they should not have been deceitful to Pharaoh. John Calvin looked at the passage and said those midwives should not have been deceitful. I think what they have offered up is technically true. I think they have made it so that there is plausible deniability. Let me see if I can paraphrase what they say to Pharaoh in verse 19. The midwives, they said to Pharaoh, look, the Hebrew women are country girls. They are not like those Egyptian city girls. Look at the word they used. They are vigorous. You see that word that? You will never see it again in the whole Bible. These two midwives said to Pharaoh the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; they are vigorous. By the time we get there, they've had that baby, and they're back working in the field. That's an inappropriate place for an Amen. It's a country girl over there. You see what they've put before the Pharaoh. What they've told him is probably what has happened, but they've sort of stacked the deck. And they are not punished. Pharaoh evidently bought it. In verses 19 – 21, we find out that because they feared God, God honored that in their lives. There is a lesson in there that I'll point out in a little bit.

So you have the first attempt by Pharaoh in verses 11 - 14. Then you have the second attempt through this private infanticide that didn't work. Then it gets real bad in verse 22. ²² *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."* All of this is a national command by Pharaoh. Throw every son that is born to the Hebrews in the Nile. Every daughter, you will let

live. What you have here now is a full-blown national policy of genocide. This is legalized, celebrated abortion. And it sets us up for Chapter 2 and Moses.

Let's go back and see what we can learn. What are some of the applications we can make as we read this passage and we get ready for Chapter 2? Let me give you just a couple of ways to apply it. Here's the first one, number one.

The blessings of God are easily forgotten

We so easily forget the blessings of God. Verse 8 says that there's a new pharaoh, a new king in Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He didn't know Joseph, and he didn't know Joseph's God. Joseph had been the Prime Minister to the Pharaoh. Joseph's administration saved Egypt from famine, starvation, and collapse. Now, there is a new administration in power that has no regard for Joseph, no regard for the people of God, and no regard for their God. There is no acknowledgment of past blessings.

I need to be careful how I say this. I am not a Christian nationalist. I don't believe in American exceptionalism. I do, however, believe that we have been exceptionally blessed as a country in multiplied ways. A lot of that has come because of our background as Christian Judeo society. You can look it up: the 1620 Mayflower. There are only 200 words embedded in the Mayflower Compact, and it contains the words for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith. And because of that, I think there has been blessings on the United States of America. I think, in large part, we have forgotten that, and we live in a society that has forgotten what you and I actually believe.

So how do we live here? We need to be equipped in three ways. You need to be equipped biblically, theologically, doctrinally. Biblically, you need to know what the Bible says. You need to know what you believe about God. Doctrine: you need to know the parameters of your faith. This is what we believe. We need to be equipped in that regard. Not only that, we need to be here in worship. We need to be together, brothers and sisters in Christ, singing to the Lord, receiving encouragement, and because of that, having our souls nourished on God's word, honoring Christ, and inviting our neighbors. Look, we need to be a group of people that not only gathered together, we need to make sure that we have turned our faces to those who are

around us, inviting the people that live next to us to come. In fact, I would say there are people that are members of Hickory Grove that are not here. You should, not in a judgmental way, but in a way that says, Man, I want you to flourish. You should be here at church. We should be training our children. That's who needs to know and believe the gospel and trust the truth of God, who need to be faithful. Because the blessings of God are so easily forgotten.

Here in Charlotte, the Queen City, there are over 700 churches, and I wonder how many churches in Charlotte will explain the explicit gospel this morning. When I say the explicit gospel, this is what I mean. The Bible teaches that God is a holy creator who created all of us in his image. You have dignity, and we celebrate the sanctity of life because people are created in the image of God. But that image is fouled by our sin. Our sin is such that it is not just taking us far away from God; it is a crime against God. We've earned this punishment, and the wages of sin is death. And so, as humans, we are living under condemnation, under the wrath of God. But he doesn't leave us like that. God, in his goodness, has given us Jesus Christ, the one who is all God and all man. He lived perfectly, a sinless life that you can't. And then, at the cross, he takes the wrath of God for all the sins of every sinner that will ever be saved. He's killed. They put him in a tomb. God raised him from the dead as a sign of hope. And the promise of the gospel is, if you will repent of your sin and put your faith in Christ, that he did that for you, you will be saved. You will have the blessings of heaven. That's one thing we forget. Here's the second application from this text, number two.

The people of God have always had it hard

That has been from the very beginning. You see that in God's people when they are coming out of Egypt. It is an escalating, ratcheting up of how bad it is. When you read the story of the church in Acts 1:8, Jesus has ascended into heaven, and he gives the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. They start in Jerusalem and are to walk out from those circles, but they never leave. It is not until Acts 8:1 where persecution comes and this terrible persecution is used by God to spread the gospel. God is always working in the very difficult times in our lives as Christians. What did Tertullian say, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. When people are killed for their faith, others rise up, and the church grows. It is what has happened in China with the underground church. Look, we live in a society that is against what we believe as Christians. Being a Christian means that we are inherently Pro-life.

We believe that God has given life, and he's the one that can take it. We're not only inherently Pro-life, but just under the umbrella of this passage, we are inherently Pro-man. Let me tell you what I mean by that. If you want to paralyze a society, then neutralize the men. If you're a warring society and you want to destroy another society, the way you do it is you take the threats away, get rid of the men. That's what Egypt's doing in the passage. Let me just tell you that Satan has used that strategy on America, and he's trying to use it on the church. And we as Christians, as a church, we ought to be doing everything we can do, certainly with our young women, but let's not forget the boys. God has made boys that will become men, and part of our job is to raise God-fearing Christian men. God has given certain qualities, and traits, and attributes to the male, to the man, and three things should happen with all of those. If you're a man, you take everything and put it under the Lordship of Christ. Christ is Lord and he has say over everything about you. Direct your strengths toward God. Is it going to be honoring to God and as a church if we celebrate that? Let me just say them on the tangent. The feminization of the American male is anti-Christian and will rot our culture. We believe that with the sanctity of life, That's what Pharaoh knew. Get rid of the baby boys. What do we do with this passage? We remember that the blessings of God are easily forgotten. And the people of God have always had a hard time. I'll give you a third thing, number three.

The ways of God include suffering

That is how God works. That is in verses 11 and 12. So Pharaoh puts this Israel under hard taskmasters. Moses tells us how terrible it is. But, the more they are oppressed, the more they multiplied. God uses the suffering for his purposes. Pharaoh's measures had the opposite effect. How did Peter say it in 1 Peter 4:12-14? ¹² *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.* ¹³ *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* ¹⁴ *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.* How does God use suffering? God uses suffering to teach us patience. God uses suffering to teach us to wait. God uses suffering in your life to remind you of your dependence on him. You're going along, and you think you've got it figured out, and something strikes you down. You did not see that coming. God uses that to remind you that you are dependent on him. You know, God uses suffering because sometimes we get prideful. And

if we didn't have the suffering happen in our lives, we might be judgmental of other people because they're struggling with something and we're not struggling with it. So, God uses suffering to bring humility to us. The ways of God include suffering. There is a fourth thing before you find this in this passage, number four.

The fear of God is a great clarifier

You see it in verse 17, and it is mentioned again in verse 21. What you have is these two women with moral conviction. And although Pharaoh, who is the most powerful man in the world at the time, has given them a command, they recognize a higher power. Look, when you have the fear of God, you risk everything to do what is right instead of doing the easy thing. That fear of God helps you do right, regardless. When you look at them, let them be a model for us. The fear of God helps us frame the gospel because the gospel is the good news that takes us away from bad news. The bad news is that God sees you in your sin and condemns you to hell, and you are under the wrath and judgment of God. But the good news is that Christ will save you. He took the wrath of God away. The fear of God frames the gospel and reminds us that, in salvation, God is saving us from Himself. The fear of God creates heroes. When people say, I fear God more than I do man, we find a sense of nobility in that. That's the whole point of not even naming Pharaoh. We don't even know Pharaoh's name. The heroes in the passage are the two midwives. The fear of God, it clarifies. Let me give you one last lesson we have in this passage. It's a hard pill to swallow, but it's there, number five.

The providence of God is always perfect

Providence is what happens. So you had a really nice vacation. That is a kind, smiling providence. You had a good day; things went really well; that's good providence. Sometimes, it's a frowning providence. It's a cloudy, grey, and dark providence. Sometimes, it is just a hard providence. If you lost a spouse or lost a child, that's hard providence. It's good for us to remember that the providence of God is perfect. Verse 22 is a tragic verse. Pharaoh commanded his people, here's the national policy: every little boy that is born to the Hebrews, cast him in the Nile but let the daughters live. I had to reach back all the way to the 4th century, Chrysostom. He helped me with this. John Chrysostom said that the Pharaoh commanded that the infants be cast into the river, and they were. But unless the infants are cast into the river,

Moses, who was cast in the Nile, would not have been saved by Pharaoh's daughter. He would not be brought up in the palace, and he would not have led God's people out of Egypt. God did this hard provenance to show the riches of his resources and the reach of his power. Look, you have no idea what God might be doing in your life at this very moment. It's good for you to be reminded that God is still working. Be faithful. Trust him. Don't forget so easily the blessings of God. Look, what you're going through is hard. The people of God have always had it hard. The ways of God, they include suffering. Fear God, like those midwives, and trust that the providence of God is always perfect.

(Pastor prays)