



Perfect Preparation

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Exodus 2:11-22

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

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" ¹⁹ They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock." ²⁰ He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." ²¹ And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. ²² She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

(Pastor Prays)

If you ever read history, you will run upon the war known as the Great War. We know it as World War One. And at the close of World War One, Winston Churchill, who was still sort of a young man, he was heroic, he was brilliant, and also he was out of office. He said, I spent 20 years in the wilderness. In fact, if you look up wilderness years in Winston Churchill, you will read a description of the 20 years he lived in the political wilderness. During that time, he was

forged into the man that would be used when Nazi Germany came to power. The world needed somebody to lead the allies against Nazi Germany, and for a time, Winston Churchill was the lone voice in the English-speaking nations that stood up against Nazism. He would be the leader that would lead the allies, and especially Britain, to victory. But before he got to do that, he had to go to the wilderness.

There's another man in our text this morning that God takes into the wilderness. He takes Moses over into the wilderness to prepare him, to use Moses for his purposes, and to do so his way. So, what I want you to do today is to just go through the text. It's going to feel a lot like a Bible study. I want you to pay attention to God today. I want you to pay attention to this story, and the pattern found in this story, and where you are in your life right now. You should ask the question, maybe write it down. What is God doing in your life right now, and how does this passage help me find out? Because when we read it today, you're to see is that...

God Perfectly Prepares Imperfect People

You are an imperfect person. Moses, he commits murder in this passage. God perfectly prepares imperfect people. I'll tell you what let's do. Let's walk through the passage. I want you to walk out with a good knowledge of the story today and then come back and maybe make some applications. Join me there, in verse 11. ¹¹*One day, when Moses had grown up*. Now, he's not just grown up between verse 10 and verse 11. It has almost been 40 years.

Sometimes, I wish we had a timetable. He's a baby in a basket, and then in verse 11, he is a 40-year-old man. Forty years pass. I'll be 56 this month. Forty years ago, I was thinking about my driver's license. Think about the years that have passed from the time I was 16 to right now. So when Moses had grown up, the little boy in the basket had become a man. In fact, from verse 11 to verse 22, what we find is that the baby in verse 10 has his own baby in verse 22. A lot of time passes. He was brought up in the Egyptian court. Remember, he is the grandson to Pharaoh, and somewhere along the way, he found out that there is more to his story than growing up as the grandson of Pharaoh. We're not told how, but somewhere along the way, he found out that he is a Hebrew. In fact, the way it's written in verse 11, two times Moses says it's his people. Do you see it? ¹¹*One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people*. Now it's

going to put in a problem. This is going to create a problem for Moses. Culturally, he is an Egyptian. That's what he knows: the riches of the palace, the power of being the Pharaoh's grandson, and being Egyptian. Culturally, that's who he is. But ethnically, in his heart, he is a Hebrew.

The problem that's going to cause is the Egyptians see him as a traitor, and the Hebrews don't trust him. In verse 11, he goes out and he sees his people being mistreated. He looked on the burdens of his people, and he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew. Now, here is premeditated murder. Look at him there. It's not a crime of passion. This is him looking one way and looking another way to see if anybody is watching. Verse 12, what does he do? ¹² *He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.* If you are prone to a bad temper, you need to just pay attention to Moses here. There is one rash act that is now going to forfeit 40 years of God preparing him to lead the people. And what a great leader he would be. He is culturally an Egyptian, but he is a Hebrew. He understands both cultures. He loses an opportunity right here in verse 12 when he kills a man, but something happened when he did that. By the way, he now has a conscience. He's hidden this body in the sand. If you've ever committed some sort of sin and you now have it put away, that becomes an abscess in your soul. Hidden sins are an abscess in your soul. One of the greatest things God can do is reveal that, open it up so that can come out. The poison can come out, and you can be healed. That sin is pushed away. He wanted it to be hidden, but verse 13 says, ¹³ *When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?"* So here is Moses, trying to save God's people with his own strength, his own approach, and his own way of doing it in his own power. He's trying to get them to head in the right direction. He's already wrongly killed an Egyptian.

Now, when you think about that, when he killed that Egyptian, there were only three people there that day. It was Moses, the man being beaten, his Hebrew brother, and the Egyptian. Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him. Now, there are only two people, Moses and the Hebrew. Moses is not telling anybody, but that Hebrew went back to his people and told the story, and the gossip started to spread through the community. Not only that, there's going to be an investigation since we are missing an Egyptian taskmaster. We're going to find out where

he is. So now Moses is worried. The text tells us, ¹⁴ *He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known."* If you ever had a hidden sin, you know it's over there, and it feels like it's going to be found out. The pressure is building there. That pressure breaks in the next verse when Pharaoh, his grandfather, hears about it. Royal Moses is a traitor now. The Hebrew people don't trust him. The Egyptians want to kill him, and the text says in verse 15, ¹⁵ *When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.*

This is the wilderness. Moses didn't choose to go out in the desert. His own sin had driven him out there. He's out in the desert of Midian, and verse 15 closes by saying, and Moses sat down at a well. He sat there completely despondent. At 40 years old, his life is ruined. In verse 16, he's sitting there thinking he's seeing a mirage. Look what it says in verse 16. ¹⁶ *Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.* Seven daughters! There are not going to be any sons here. Not two or three daughters. That is difficult enough. Not four or five, this man has seven daughters. I'm guessing they're homeschooled girls and are probably brilliant. They can speak Latin and make sourdough bread. I mean, we don't know how old they are, but they're close enough in age that they are all traveling together. And Moses, sitting there by that well, looks up and thinks, what am I seeing here? So he sees them coming, and they came and drew water. They filled the trough to water their father's flock. It is a lot of work. So you get the water into a jar, I don't know, maybe five gallons at a time and put it into the trough. They had to go back and forth, and it takes hours to do so. They're doing all of this work, and he's sitting there watching. And then shepherds came in verse 17. The shepherds came and drove them away. ¹⁷ *The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock.* Look at Moses. All of a sudden, Moses stood up. Look at that word: saved. That's exactly what he's going to do. He delivered God's people out of Egypt. It's the very first time we see him actually saving in the right way, actually leading in the right way. So Moses stands up and saved them, and he watered the flock.

Let's talk about Moses. Moses is a 40-year-old, single man in the company of seven women. He's thinking, I've got a shot right here. So he runs the shepherds off. There's a certain amount

of bravery and bravado and courage and something noble about what he's doing, right? So he runs them off, and he not only does that, he comes back and fills the troughs back up for them. It's a lot of work. He waters the flock. So the daughters come home early because normally they are harassed by these shepherds, and look what the text says in verses 18-20. ¹⁸ *When they came home to their father Reuel (this is Jethro here), he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?"* ¹⁹ *They said, "An Egyptian (it's interesting to me that he has the look of an Egyptian) delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock."* ²⁰ *He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."* Their father cannot believe what he's hearing. He said to them, look, I have seven girls and no sons. We finally got a guy that'll do something, and you leave him in the desert. Where is he? So they said, well, you know what, we better go back and get Moses. They go back to get Moses. He thinks his attempt had failed, but they come back.

So they came back and got Moses, and the text says in verse 21, ²¹ *And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah.* Moses was content. I mean, it's the very first time we see Moses content here. He's grown up, and at some point in his early life, he realized he was not really Egyptian, but he's not Hebrew either. It's been a torturous existence. He finally breaks out at 40 years old in a rash act and kills a man. He has to run off into the desert. Isn't it good to be content? If you're content in Christ and your soul's content in what the Lord has given you, your content in marriage, your content in your situation, it is a good thing when you see Moses here. ²¹ *And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah.* We don't know where she fit in the seven, but he gave Moses his daughter, Zipporah. So now verse 22 skips in time again. You see, they have a marriage in verse 21, and she becomes pregnant. ²² *She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."* This means I'm a man without a country. I'm just passing through.

I heard one preacher say that Moses spent 40 years in Egypt. God took him to the desert, and he would spend 40 years in the desert getting Egypt out of Moses. Moses would go back and lead God's people for 40 years. What does God do perfectly? He prepares imperfect people.

Let's go back and look at some practical lessons that we learn from Exodus 2:11-22. Here's the first one, number one.

God doesn't use angry people

In verses 11 and 12, God is not going to use Moses as long as he is ruled by these outburst. If you are a man or a woman given to a bad temper, when you lose your temper, you are being used by Satan, not by God. That is dishonoring to the Lord. What Moses does here is going to cost him 40 years in the desert. If you're a man or woman with a bad temper and you're claiming Christ as Lord, this is an area in your life where the Lordship of Christ must reign. If you blow up like this, you are like Moses, who lost an opportunity. Moses had a good intent. He is rightly bothered by someone being beaten. He did what he felt was right. This is a good intention, lived out wrongly. If you're a married couple, do you do this to the mother of your children? Look, just remember, if you send something in a text, it is held there and can be read over and over again. If you write in some sort of anger, what you end up doing is you waste the potential. Think about the potential that Moses had. He came up an Egyptian. He was linked to power, he has this burden for his people, he had all the potential in the world, and he loses it.

Not only that, when you get down to verse 12, you see him blowing up. But this is not just an act of passion. He doesn't just lose his temper. He looked one way and the other. He made sure that nobody sees him because what he's going to be doing here is going to be something that is a sin. He doesn't want anybody to see it. And then he buries the evidence. Here is the misuse of empathy. The word empathy, to be empathetic, is to actually feel. The only time that is useful is when we are taking the gospel and we are doing something for empathy's sake. God's gonna take Moses, and before he can use him, he's got to get all that anger out of his system. And he's going to do that in the desert. God doesn't use angry people. If you are prone to anger, that is your problem. Let's put that under the Lordship of Christ. The good thing about this passage is that you learn that God can change people and, that God redeems, forgives, and that God restores. That God can make you into who he wants you to be, but he doesn't use angry people. Let me give you a second lesson to learn, number two.

God's people do things God's way

So, God has chosen Moses from the very beginning. When we're introduced, we know that this child is special. The midwives save this child, and then he's saved out of the Nile. The Pharaoh's daughter saves him. We know he is chosen by God, and we know that God is going to save his

people because at the end of this passage, that I'll preach next week, we see God remembering. But what we looked at right here, Moses wants to save his people, but he does it through sinful means. It is never right to sin. It matters how we do things. To do something sinful in order to achieve some other good is the wrong thing. When it comes to being a Christian, how we live our lives, how we disagree with one another, how we would argue with one another, how we make sure our marriage stays together, how we are at work, how we do our taxes, matters. The negative lesson for Moses is that God's people do things God's way. Let me give you another lesson to learn, number three.

God disciplines those he loves

Moses is chosen. Moses is called. Moses falls into terrible sin, and God takes him to the wilderness before he can use him. He takes him to the desert. That's where we find him in verse 15. The text says, ¹⁵ *When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.* Moses has absolutely blown it, but God doesn't take his hand off of Moses. Listen to me; when you absolutely blow it, God does not abandon you, but he does discipline. God disciplines those that he loves. He's going to take Moses for 40 years in the desert before he brings him back to use him to lead the people out of Egypt.

Moses sat down at the well, and to me, it feels like there's some despondency. When Nehemiah heard about the walls of Jerusalem falling down, Nehemiah says, I sat down and wept for days. The Psalmist says in Psalm 137, *By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept.* In verse 15, God is going to do something with Moses. He is going to do something with Moses, but some of that devilment, some of that in Moses, is going to have to be worked out. For some of you, God is still making you, still fashioning you. Please don't confuse discipline with judgment. They are not the same thing. Judgment is the wrath of God poured out, rightly and justly, on those who have sinned and are not in Christ. We stand under the judgment of God, and judgment is the punishment when people are sent to hell. That is judgment. Oftentimes, those that are living here, that are not in Christ and commit some sort of sin, then judgment comes. When you are in Christ, what you've done is you've gone and trusted that Jesus Christ died on the cross and the judgment of God that you deserve is poured on him, and you've received mercy and grace and forgiveness. So when you go through something hard

after you have sinned, you do something, and you are punished; that is discipline and not judgment. Discipline has a redemptive purpose. It is bringing you back. It is shaping you into someone. Judgment is falling on those who God hates in hell. Discipline is given to sons and daughters that he loves. What did the writer say in Hebrews, Hebrews 12:6? *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*” Are you in the middle of God disciplining you? This is not God turning from you. This is God's love in your life. This is God turning you into a man or woman that he can use. With Moses, it's going to take 40 years. Don't ever forget that God disciplines the ones he loves. There is another lesson you might learn from Moses' life. This is number four.

God uses the wilderness

God uses the desert. God uses the desert relationally, spiritually, and emotionally. Maybe vocationally, you're in the desert. You're out there. That's not time wasted. God is not wasting Moses' time in the desert. He is using that to make him into something. How do I know that? In verse 15, we meet Moses in the desert. And when you see him sitting there, we are reminded that God has taken him out there to meet with him. We're going to see chapter 3 that God meets him in the wilderness. Remember Jacob's Stairway when he dreamt its stairway to heaven? You know where that happened, in the wilderness. Remember the story of Elijah hearing the still, small voice. You know that happened in the wilderness. John the Baptist went out to the wilderness, and there he preached repentance. In Matthew 3, the wilderness is where Jesus went to have a victory over Satan. God does not waste the wilderness. God is going to meet you there.

What else do we know? When you go to the wilderness, God's going to give you courage. When you read about Moses' life, in verse 17, there is this right courage. He took courage to kill the Egyptian, but that was something good turned bad. Now, we find him defending these seven sisters. This is him standing up, doing the right thing. Sometimes, God takes you to the desert to teach you humility. You see Moses there in verse 17. Here is an Egyptian doing shepherd's work. Sometimes, God takes you out there to teach you to serve. Moses was learning what it meant to be subservient and to serve and do so gladly. In verse 17, he's serving the women. Sometimes, God takes you into the desert for you to learn dependence. Moses is now taken away from the privilege of Egypt, and although he still looked like an Egyptian, God is going to

teach him to depend on him. Sometimes, God takes you into the desert to teach you how to trust him. You may feel like you're being disciplined by him, and he takes you out there to learn to trust. Sometimes, God takes you to the desert to teach you how to be patient. It's going to take 40 years for God to sand off the rough edges of Moses' life. Look, God is not in a rush, and you should not be in a rush either. Sometimes, in the desert, we learn patience. He might take us out in the desert to teach us character. Before this, Moses was concerned with what people thought. By verse 17, you find him is learning bravery. We learn how to fight injustice and how to right wrongs. He acts against oppression. Don't hate the wilderness. God has taken you out there.

Maybe at your age, you feel like you've been out there forever. It's been such a devastating hurt, and it feels like this is where you are. Don't hate that. Or maybe you've been single for so long, you want to be married, and you wonder how long do I stay in the desert? Or maybe you're on the other side; you are married and wish you were single. You stay in there. He has you there. Why does he take us into the desert? He meets us in the desert and makes us who he wants us to be. We have one last lesson that I find in verse 22.

God reminds us, this is not our home

We're going to find the gospel here. I'm going to take the gospel out of verse 22. ²²*She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."* This is not my home. I don't know where my home is, but I'm just passing through.

Moses becomes a clear picture of the gospel. So, how do we take the gospel out of this passage right here? In Exodus chapter 2, Moses identifies himself with God's people. In verse 11, he says two times, my people. Moses identifies himself with God's people in their suffering. He does so in order to save them. In a much higher and holier way, Jesus, who is the truer and greater Moses, has identified with us in our condition. The writer of Hebrew says, he is not ashamed to call us his brothers. Jesus lived in a way that we can't, living perfectly as a perfect man or woman, and at the cross, he takes that perfection off and puts on our sin. He clothes himself

with our sin. But if he is garmented in our sin, we need a garment. He then takes his garment of righteousness and puts it on us so that he takes the punishment for our sin, and we get the love of God because of his righteousness. But you have got to trust and believe that Christ has done that for you. God reminds us this is not a home. The Gospel teaches that God perfectly prepares imperfect people. God perfectly saves imperfect people when you trust in Christ, his perfect life, his atoning death, and his victorious resurrection. God has brought you into the wilderness. Are you learning there? What is the thing you're resisting that God is doing? Or maybe you hear this, and you've never connected Moses to Christ and what Christ has done. You've heard that, and you want to talk to someone about giving your life to Christ. There are two ways we would do that here. One is we would invite any of you that want to talk to a pastor to walk all the way down here. Another way is that after church, all of our pastors will be out in the lobby, and if you want to talk to one of our pastors about what it means to give your life to Christ, they are ready to talk through you, turning a new leaf and giving your life to Christ. Join me now as we pray together.

(Pastor prays)