

EXODUS 2:1-22  
*Moses, the first 80 years 9-15-13*

(Exodus 2) Imagine, if you can, that you live in China where you are prohibited from having more than one child and you find your wife is pregnant with your third. The law says you must report for an abortion but your conscience will not allow that. The law says any additional child will be put to death. What will you do? ® Such was the predicament of Amram and Jochebed, the parents of the man you know as Moses. Referring to the Hebrew slave force, the Egyptian king, known as Pharaoh said this in Exodus 1:22 *Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.”* It is that awful edict of Pharaoh, a monarch frightened by the growth of a foreign subculture in Egypt which he did not understand, that sets the context for what follows in chapter two. 2:1 *Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.* What that means is that both mom and dad were descendants of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. And what is it that is distinct about the tribe of Levi? It is the priestly tribe. It is from the descendants of Levi that God had determined to take his priests. And Moses, along with his brother, Aaron, was to become a priest, someone who represents a certain people before the Lord.

I said the names of Moses’ parents were Amram and Jochebed. I get that from Exodus 6:20 *Amram married his father’s sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses.* What immediately caught my attention when I read that was the fact that Amram married his aunt Jochebed didn’t he? His Aunt Jochebed could easily have been younger than him but the results of this are mindboggling. This means that Amram’s father would have also been his brother in-law and he would have been his own uncle. Imagine that. Imagine how confused Moses would be when his mother was also his great aunt, and his father was his cousin and his grandparents and great-grandparents were the same people. To prevent others from going through what he endured, Moses, with some help from God, laid down a law in Leviticus 18:12 that you should not marry your aunt - which is one of the few biblical laws we have managed to keep. Congratulations!

2-4 *The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. 3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.* This too is very hard to imagine. What would it feel like to do this with your precious son? To abandon your

son, but to do it for his own good. Commentators differ in their outlook on what these parents did. John Calvin really gave Jochebed a hard time for doing this, for leaving her infant son to the elements. But I don't think that is the perspective of Scripture. Hebrews 11 says Mo's parents were people of faith. How thoroughly they planned out what did happen is hard to say but apparently they were trusting their baby to God when they left him in the reeds. And sometimes, sometimes, this is what loving parents have to do isn't it? Especially as the child gets older you have to let go and then pray like crazy. And part of the pain of doing that is a relentless voice implying that you are a bad parent for leaving your child so vulnerable even when to not do it will mean certain death. Hey, mom and dad, what I'm about to say is no excuse for laziness, but it's true that God can take care of our kids without us.

Well, the basket plan for effective parenting was a marvelous success. **5-9** *The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" 8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 Then 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.* What luck! What a coincidence! Not a coincidence at all was it? We don't know if this was Jochebed's brilliant plan but we do know it was God's brilliant plan. This was no accident and it couldn't have worked out better. Not only would Moses live but his own mother would raise him and, get this, she would be paid for doing it! God can do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. But still the situation is far from ideal. A day was coming, they all knew, when Moses would enter the palace of Pharaoh. **10** *The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."* How old was he when he moved in with the princess? No one knows. I read all kinds of conjecture about the childhood of Moses but no one really knows how long he spent with his parents. Acts 7:**22** *Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians.* Apparently his education was largely Egyptian in nature. He had the finest tutors Egypt could offer and he graduated with honors from Thebes Tech or maybe, Cairo College. Moses was an Egyptian in training, but, but, whatever he took from his Hebrew home - whether it affected

his mind or heart or whatever, it was enough to secure his ultimate allegiance to the Hebrews and their God. **11** *Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.* It says Moses went out to his brethren. He went out of the palace to his brethren. There is more to that than just him going on a walk. Look at the inspired commentary of Hebrews 11: **24** *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. There was a conscious rejection of his upbringing and his nation, a nation in which he was highly favored. But Moses made a choice, a stupendous, incredible choice **25-26** choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin<sup>26</sup> considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.* Man oh man, you talk about faith! Here is Moses, sitting in the lap of luxury in the palace of Egypt, as part of the royal family and he makes a choice to identify with and to join up with a nation of slaves. Who can figure? How can it be? Only with God. God had worked through his Hebrew parents, in the days of early childhood to instill in Moses a conscience. His conscience was likely quieted in his youth by the exciting pleasures afforded him but when he was grown, really when he was near forty, Moses could not shut down the voice of conscience. He saw the injustice of Egypt, the suffering of the Hebrews and he knew "they, the oppressed ones are my people." Hebrews 11 says he knew something more. He knew that true happiness, true riches were to be found in being God's man and among God's people. He made a radical choice to be holy now and happy forever instead of enjoying the passing, temporary pleasures of sin in this life. What a lesson! What an example! The story of Moses contrasts with another we read in the New Testament. I speak of the man we call the rich, young ruler. Remember him? He came to Jesus wanting to sign up for the Jesus team but when Jesus told him it would cost him his riches he refused. He chose the passing pleasures of sin over eternal life and spiritual wealth. And friend, those same basic choices are before us still. They may come into sharper focus over time. You see, many people are happy to go with the church when things are flying high. When church is socially acceptable and the gifts are tax deductible then you will call yourself a Christian, but where will you be on the day of persecution? Where will you be when identifying with God's people has a high price tag? Will we see you here then, will you be running the race or will you be playing in the palace?

The decision for Moses was made tougher by his prosperity as an Egyptian. Had the choice been between being a poor Egyptian or a poor Hebrew it wouldn't have been so remarkable but Moses

went from riches to rags when he choose Israel over Egypt. Jesus said it is hard, so very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. He has more to lay down, more to lose doesn't he? My best friend growing up was named Jim Williams. His grandfather made major dollars in limestone mining. His family owned lots of land and orange groves. Jim's dad was lieutenant governor of Florida and the head of the US Department of Agriculture under President Carter. My friend was healthy and wealthy and he loved his fun - so that he consciously chose the passing pleasures of sin. He even said to me that he believed Jesus was true but he loved his sin too much to give his life to Christ. Would you pray with me for my friend Jim? It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, but with God all things are possible. Witness Moses.

Moses displayed some magnificent faith by going out to his brethren, but his faith was far from perfect. Now Moses displays his sin. 11 *he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.* So, what do you do if you are called to be the deliverer of Egypt? If you are an impetuous, hot-tempered sinner like Moses you decide to do it your way. 12 *So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.* Did the Egyptian deserve it? Yeah! Should Moses have done it? No! In spite of the reasons, this is murder. Shooting bigots is murder. Killing abortionists is murder. Vengeance belongs to God and the state and Moses was neither one of those. What he was, was a murderer, a man with a past. What are you? Some of you have done some awful things haven't you and no one knows but God - so you hope. Question: what is the last thing in the world you would want someone to ask you? That could generate some interesting thoughts. For Moses, his worst nightmare came true 13 *He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?"* Moses, we see this three times in one chapter had a passion for the oppressed and the persecuted. 14ab *But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"* Uh-oh! That was the last thing Moses wanted to hear. 14c-15 *Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known."* 15 *When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.*

Let's go ahead and finish out the story. 16-22 *Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. 18 When*

*they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?" 19 So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock." 20 He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat." 21 Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. 22 Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."* The name Moses gives his son hints at how Moses felt to be in Midian. He was not happy there. He could never see it as home. He was not in the palace in Egypt, he was not delivering his people, he was instead in a foreign country, watching sheep, married to a woman whose name means *Lady Bird*. Chapter 3 tells us Moses cared for the sheep of his father-in-law. Now, I want you to get inside Moses' skin for a minute. How would you feel? Sitting there by a well in Midian, a fugitive from justice, no family, no country, nothing! Even when God took care of him and provided a wife and family there had to be in Moses an overwhelming sense of failure. And it all went back to one notorious day. One hour in that day. One event! But how many people there are sitting in prisons or even sitting in church who can look back to one awful decision that blew their lives apart. Maybe it was a decision to pursue your lusts. Maybe it was a decision to get rich quick. Maybe, like Moses, it was an explosion of anger. Uncontrolled rage like this is not a little thing. The consequences are enormous. I knew a young basketball player who was kicked out of the state championship game, the super bowl for a high-school kid, because he lost his temper on the court. That kid will never get over that. And Moses is facing the same thing times ten. His temper destroyed him and now he is washed up. He is history, a failure, a nobody in Midian. How would you have felt? Some of you can relate. You have felt the very same things. Your self-esteem is shattered. Your life is torn apart. You aren't where you should be and it's no one's fault but your own. How do you feel about yourself? Not good. What hope do you have for the future? Not much. What love do you have for God? Very little. God has put you on the shelf, how can you love Him? Look at Moses.®! Forty years God had him on the back side of the desert tending sheep but God never abandoned him and God always had a plan. Look at Moses.

Now, look at God. These Old Testament stories are great. The characters they present are bigger than life but their ultimate greatness is found in the theology they present. We learn about Moses here but we also learn about God. Two attributes of God are on display in this story. One of those is the grace of God. ® Consider where Moses ends up. He is on the Mt. of Transfiguration

with Jesus. Moses is the mediator of the law, the author of the five best-selling books of all time. I said last week that Moses is right there in the US Supreme Court. That is where Moses ended up, but where was he years before? Where was he as a man in the prime of his life? In Midian, tending sheep for his father n' law and a fugitive from justice! Let's not mince words here, Moses was a murderer. Think of the awful sense of guilt. Real GUILT! You talk about a skeleton in the closet - Moses had one in the sands of Egypt. What if Moses had tried to run for president or been nominated to the Supreme Court? The investigation would have landed him in jail and yet, through the gracious work of God, Moses is in the supreme court 3000 years later. A murderer honored in the supreme court of our land! This is amazing grace dear people! This is God's grace to sinners. He took a sin-broken, colossal failure and made him the national hero and even more amazingly he made him the friend of God, the one who met with him face to face. You ponder that for a few minutes. When you are paralyzed by your guilt, when you are weighted down by your failure, when you feel useless think about the God of Moses. There is no sin beyond the reaches of his grace. You cannot outsin God's grace; you cannot outgrow it. No matter what you have done God can put it away; God can overcome and He can work through you again. If God only used perfect, spotless vessels there would be no one to use. But he takes people like Moses, people like me - stained, soiled, unworthy vessels, and makes them his champions, makes them his friends. Years ago God took a washed up, broken down political hack who was sitting in prison - a man named Chuck Colson and gave him a sense of heavenly purpose, gave him a vision to start a Christian ministry in prisons and then used him mightily for the three decades that followed. God is into renovation projects like that. He says he will make bloody murderous hands as white as snow. Forty years ago Westley Allan Dodd was executed by hanging at the Washington State Pen. Before his sentence was carried out, the convicted serial child killer was given the customary opportunity for last words. Here was a young man who had viciously abused and mutilated three young boys, a man who has said he would do it again, a man who said there was no hope he would ever be released from the hideous darkness within his soul. His final words came as a shock to many. He said, "I was wrong when I said there was no hope, no peace. There is hope. There is peace. I have found both in the Lord Jesus Christ." Does your heart say "amen" when you hear that? Can you relate to this child-killer? Boy, I sure can, for I am guilty of the same basic sins and have been forgiven by the same holy Savior. Others will scoff at the notion of God receiving criminals of that magnitude, but I point you to Moses, the murderer, to David the adulterous murderer, to Paul the Christian

basher, to Jacob the swindler. These are the friends of God. Outrageous! you say and I fully agree. The grace of God is outrageous. We can only thank him and marvel.

Next and finally I want you to see in our story the sovereignty of God. Do you see that Pharaoh isn't running the show but God is? Pharaoh was trying to destroy God's people but God was working to establish them. Pharaoh worked on extermination, God worked on emancipation. While Pharaoh tried to kill off the leaders of the next generation of Hebrews God was preparing his man. God used his mother and the princess to rescue Moses. God used even the sin of Moses and the anger of Pharaoh to prepare Moses even more. You see the time in Midian was all in God's plan too. Moses couldn't see the purpose either but God was sending Moses to school in Midian. Bernard Ramm says, "*Moses received his B.A. in political administration in the household of Pharaoh and his M.A. in desert survival in Midian. He was now educated for the mission of his life.*" He understood the courts of Pharaoh, he understood life in the desert and he was about to lead a couple of million people out of one and through the other into the promised land. And Pharaoh couldn't begin to stop him. God is sovereign. He controls history and I must close by reminding you that Moses is a type of the Deliverer to come isn't he? The life of Moses was designed by God to picture before us the life of Christ in certain ways. You remember that Christ survived a government-mandated slaughter of babies by going to Egypt. And Christ, like Moses, left his glory to join with sinners in order that He might deliver us from bondage through His sufferings and His victory. Moses was one of the greatest men in history but his life is a pointer for us - directing our gaze upon Jesus, the Great Liberator and the friend of sinners. If you are a sinner too, I implore you to call on Jesus and be saved. Shall we pray.