

Exodus

Chapter 2.1-10

Bulrush baby

8.01.2006

Last week, we left the Israelites languishing under the regime of an evil Pharaoh. To crush them he had tried the brute force of slavery, the stealth of midwives killing baby boys, and the ruthless order to throw all baby boys into the Nile to drown. God had continued to bless them through their pain of slavery, and averted the stealth. But would he stop them physically drowning baby boys?

I promised that this week we would see God's surprising answer to this horrendous evil. It was not a quick heart-attack for Pharaoh, nor even a slow death.

Instead, God let the evil continue, just as He had let the slavery continue - not because God is evil - but because of the way God deals with us.

For he has given us freedom to choose good or choose evil. And He rarely intervenes directly in miraculous ways. Miracles occur, but the reason that miracles are miracles is because they are infrequent and unusual events. God chose what some might call a weak way. And through this weakness, he rescued and strengthened his people to persevere against evil, enriching their character and hope.

So in the midst of the pain and agony of losing their sons, Exodus 2 speaks of the birth of a boy. In the ordinariness of life, God brings His solution, in a surprising way. We are told *"Now a man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son."*

No names are given, just a couple from the house of Levi.

We may think that he was the firstborn son, but later we learn that he has a sister (Miriam) who is much older, and a brother (Aaron) who is three years older than him.

This gives a clue as to how long the drownings had been going before this baby's birth. If his brother was three when Moses was born, then the general slaughter must not have been long enforced. God acted near the start of the horror

to bring about his good purposes.

But how can this boy survive? Has not Pharaoh ordered his death? Who can hide a baby boy without someone hearing him, or seeing his nappy changed and say "She's not a girl!" His mother hid him for 3 months, but the time had come when he could no longer safely be kept.

I have spoken and cried with people who have lost their young ones. But to let your baby son be killed because of a law, is a horrific experience I never want to have, nor see.

The law stated he had to be thrown into the Nile. So she did. But she found a loophole. Nowhere did it say he could not be in a boat. So they made a waterproof basket and lid, and tossed it gently into the river, with her baby inside. and then his sister stood by to see what happened.

Imagine Miriam's dismay, when she saw Pharaoh's daughter stop for a wash just near the baby... Maybe she would not notice... but the princess saw it, and sent a slave to fetch it... this must be the end, for surely this princess wouldn't disobey her father! But, *"When she opened it she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him, saying "This must be one of the Hebrews' children."*

Is it not amazing how God tends to have the right person at the right time to say the right thing! There was bold Miriam, watching, and just as the Princess is wondering what she could do, Miriam steps up and says *"Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"* The timing was spot on, and the baby's mother is given the joy of rearing her own child with palace protection, and is also paid for doing it.

He did not suffer the same fate as many others. God saved one, kept him safe, but this isn't the whole answer to what God would do. For here was a son who had been given up for dead and was now alive again. It has a familiar ring to it, does it not? For in the Bible, another son was given up for dead, and made a stunning

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comeback. It was Joseph. His father gave him up for dead, yet God put him in Pharaoh's palace, to save God's people from a great disaster.

Would God do the same? Would Moses be another Joseph, second in command of all of Egypt? Maybe he would bring peace and prosperity to God's people. Was he being given an early start to great opportunities of doing good for God?

For the answers to all these questions and more, you will have to come back next week.

But in the mean time, you may have thought of another son like Joseph and Moses, who was given up for dead, yet made a startling comeback. Yes, it is Jesus. For his infant years had the horror of baby boys being butchered too. Ironically, not by a hate filled Egyptian Pharaoh, but by the leader of God's people, Herod, king of the Jews.

At Herod's command, once he had realised that he had been tricked by the wise men, all boys up to two years old, were butchered in Bethlehem. And to top it all off, this little baby had a narrow escape by finding safety in Egypt.

How often when we pray for help, do we want God to act in immediate and unmistakable ways? Yet at significant events of God's actions in dealing with humans, God has worked through small seemingly weak events. They could have been snuffed out by the savage, overpowering threats of evil. Yet God's chosen way of rescuing people has been through the apparently weak, who've been surprisingly effective.

Ungodly forces often have the veneer of power and the ability to crush the weak or innocent, to inflict their ways on people. But God works through the veneer of weakness, showing an amazing undercurrent of strength, which refuses to crush. It may appear to be crushed, yet through suffering, as Romans 5 says, comes perseverance, character and hope.

If you think God's work is weak in our powerful

secular society, if you think that God's word is weak in our age of instant communication and reporting, if you think His good news is stale and ineffective, then think again. For the good news of Jesus is God's power of salvation, it appears weak and futile to the perishing, it has the smell of death to those who reject it; but it is the smell of life, of power and of hope to all who believe.

God's true power now is most actively at work in changing people when they hear His gospel, and God's Spirit uses His word to change us from inside out, so we will continue to live for Him.

In our weakness, He is strong. God has chosen the foolish things of this world, to destroy the wisdom of the wise. He chose the weak things of this world to shame the strong.

Do not be ashamed of His weakness, for it is His strength.