

## Failure, Flight, Formation, Faithfulness

- Exodus 2:11-25

Good Morning/Evening!

I am so thankful for this opportunity to open God's word together and take a closer look at Exodus 2:11-25. I have learned so much from this passage and I am excited to share it with all of you!

Exodus 2:11-25 is what some would call a pivotal passage because it takes us from the point where we left off last week with Ellen where she so beautifully helped us to see the miraculous preservation of Moses as an infant to this week's passage where we will learn more about Moses as an adult and his struggles with justice, identity, and his leadership skills. We will also see that Israel's deliverance is not dependent upon Moses' initiative but instead upon God's covenantal faithfulness.

As we dig into this passage we are going to focus on four key points that jumped out at me as I studied this passage and will hopefully help us organize our thoughts as we go through this talk today. ( written on board)

The four key points are ( point out on the board).

Failure

Flight

Formation

Faithfulness

## **FAILURE**

Read with me as we take a look at the first point - failure- Let's take a look at vv.

11-14

**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.[a] **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."*

Wow! What a way to start off our lesson today! But before we get into the details of this part of the story let's step back and consider at what point in Moses' life did this occur? What exactly does it mean when it says Moses was "grown up"?

Well, Acts 7:21-22 tells us Moses was 40 years old when this incident occurs. And he left the palace in order to go among his own people. Do you think this was hard for him? Is it hard for us to step out of our comfort zones? I know it is hard for me - And I'm assuming most of us were not raised in a palace with all of its prestige and conveniences?

If we look at Moses' life we can summarize the following about him -He was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. He had access to and was educated in all the wisdom of Egypt and the riches of Egypt were at his disposal. He had privilege, and notoriety. Moses certainly had a lot going for him!

He was set up perfectly with everything we might think would be needed to be the leader and liberator God wanted him to be. So then, why did He begin to grapple with questions of justice, identity, and his role in the outcome of the Hebrews and decide to leave his home?

Hebrews 11:24-26 sheds a little more light on this. It says that " By Faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be mistreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He

considered the reproach or as some would say -suffering for Christ greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward.” In his heart he knew he was a Hebrew and took it upon himself to right the wrongs that were being done to his people.

So in v. 11, he sets out, in spite of his position, on behalf of the oppressed Israelites. He went out to his people and looked on their burdens in order to help them. But was his background, commitment, and courage enough? Motyer, one of commentators, suggests that Moses was if anything **too** resolute, resourceful, brave and effective in action. This seems to ring true because when he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people, he first looks around to see if anyone is looking, kills the Egyptian, and hides the body in the sand.

What drove Moses to commit this terrible murder? Why did he do it? Had his emotions built up over the years? Does scripture give us any more information? Well, in Acts 7:25 we are told that when Moses killed the Egyptian he was acting in obedience to a divine vocation as he understood it. He saw himself as God’s appointed deliverer. So Moses took the law into his own hands and things did not turn out well at all! Hindsight is 20/ 20 as they say and here we see that the murder of the Egyptian slave master was indeed foolish!

So what could have been his motive? Stephen, who was later martyred for his faith, sheds more light upon this. Acts 7:25 tells us that Moses “supposed that his brothers

would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.”

Several commentators suggested that perhaps pride could be the issue for Moses. What do you think? Do we struggle with pride in this way? Do we see ourselves as “God’s appointed deliverer’s” - perhaps in the lives of our children, family or friends? I know I sometimes do and I continually ask the lord to reveal and forgive these tendencies and temptations in my heart when they start to overtake me.

So what happens next? After killing the Egyptian and hiding the body, Moses goes out the next day and comes upon, this time, two **Hebrews** in a physical struggle. Moses tries to intercede once again and confronts the man in the wrong. But once again this doesn’t turn out the way Moses had planned either and he is confronted with the reality that the murder that he himself had committed the day before is public knowledge and he knows that it is only a matter of time before Pharaoh finds out!

Now before we continue, I would like to pause a moment and consider something I was thinking about as I prepared this talk. When reading the Bible and learning about heroes of the faith like David and Abraham - I often forget that they are people just like you and I - sinful people in need of a sinless savior - who God used to accomplish his purposes. The bible gives us many examples of how God works through sinners who failed in one way or another; Abraham didn’t really trust in God’s timing, became impatient, and had a child from a woman who was his servant, not his wife. And this

woman, Hagar, and the son conceived through Abraham, suffered profoundly as a result of Abraham's sin. David, a man after God's own heart, committed adultery and had a man murdered. Once again, profound suffering cascaded out and down through David's selfish, misuse of his kingly power. And yet God had a perfect plan. Mike Emlet helps us to understand this better by reminding us that God ministers to us simultaneously as

1. Saints - who need confirmation of their identity as children of God.
2. Sufferers- who need comfort in the midst of their affliction
3. Sinners - who need challenge to their sin in light of God's redemptive mercies

And sisters, I can relate to the ongoing reality of being a saint in Christ, and also a sufferer, and a sinner. Let me share part of a faith building story from my life that started two years ago. One day in November 2023 I was caring for my two granddaughters who live next door and I noticed that my 18 month old granddaughter Maisey was not feeling well. She was very thirsty, very tired, and seemed to have lost weight within the last week. Needless to say, I was very concerned! But before we continue - we need to step back in time and give a few more details.

Approximately 40 years before this day - this day that I noticed that something was wrong with Maisey, I was sent by the company I worked for at that time to become a

1st Responder. A first responder is someone with specialized medical training who is the first to arrive and provide medical assistance in an emergency. Well, all of that training and Maisie's symptoms presented themselves to me on that day and I reluctantly told my daughter in-law that I thought that Maisie might have diabetes - which was confirmed the next day when she was rushed to CHOP.

It would be an understatement to say that this was a very, very difficult time for Maisie, her parents, and our entire family. But the Lord gave us the strength to get through many, many difficult days and nights. Because of my training and because they lived next door, I became Maisie's main backup to help her parents when needed. After many months of learning how to deal with all of the complexities of Type I Diabetes, finally, in earlier this year in April of 2025, my son and daughter in-law felt comfortable enough to go away for an overnight celebration of their 30th birthdays and they asked my husband Rick and I if we would care for their, now three children, while they went away. It was such a blessing to serve them in this way especially after what they had been through the last year and a half! And as you might have guessed - this is not the end of the story. I'll share more of what happened in a few minutes.

But first, let's go back to Moses - a Saint, a sufferer, and a sinner - He knows that the news of what he has done will travel quickly and get back to Pharaoh - and he doesn't have much time!

Let's look at our next point where we will look at FLIGHT.

Lets read together vv 15-20

**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."

In Midian which was probably located in northwestern Arabia, we find Moses again in a similar circumstance as he was earlier in chapter 2. In Egypt, he defended a beaten Hebrew which resulted in a murder. The next day he tried to reconcile two Hebrews during a physical altercation and here we find Moses defending Reul's daughters from a group of hostile shepherds. Jay Sklar, one of our recommended commentators suggested that this last example was a form of foreshadowing - Moses saves and delivers the women at the well - a sign of what he would one day do for Israel.

What we can conclude from these three examples is that Moses is consistent in his concern for the oppressed and his desire to fulfill God's plan for his life. God is working through him to bring about His purposes.



So what happens next after Moses goes back with Reuel's daughters to have something to eat and meet their father?

Moses' formation begins.

### **Formation**

Unlike what happened to Moses earlier in our passage when he intervened and tried to help the oppressed Hebrews - Did you notice? This time seems to be different.

This time Moses seems to have found a place to call home -surrounded by a new family and new friends. This is a time of transformation and preparation for Moses that takes place under less than ideal circumstances - while he is living in exile.

Lets read vv 21 and 22.

**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[b] in a foreign land.

If we were watching a show on Netflix that started out with a miraculous rescue of a baby that was hidden in a basket floating down the Nile River, to a life spent living in Pharaoh's palace, to a murderer who is now living in exile - most likely we would not expect that this would be the story of a deliverer for God's people. After all, Moses was

the promised child and he really messed up - but God's plan for Moses was bigger than his failures.

Even though Moses was living in exile he was not forgotten - he was being changed. And he was content - content to stay where he was ( for the next 40 years as a matter of fact) and raise his two sons - the first whom he named Gershom - which means foreigner in a foreign land.

During this time in Midian Moses most likely spends his days not honing his leadership skills but instead learning how to become a shepherd. A skill he is going to need in the future as he shepherds Israel in the wilderness. This really hit me! His time in exile is not a time of abandonment or idleness but a time of training. This is a valuable lesson for each one of us!

So now we come to our final point - Faithfulness. If someone were to ask you what is your favorite passage in the Bible what would you say? I would probably say Psalm 23. But Paul Tripp shared that Exodus 2 vv 23-25 is one of his favorite passages in the OT and perhaps even in the whole bible. And as you will see, perhaps it will become one of your favorites as well!

Let's read v 23

**23** During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

There is so much going on here in just this one verse! When you read this passage what are your feelings toward the Israelites? Are you like me? Are you asking - Where is God and why is it taking him so long to respond? Does He Care? Is he going to do anything?

Do you, like me, struggle with persevering in faithfulness and patience when God's timing does not fit your agenda or schedule?

Another thing to notice from the beginning of this verse is that the King of Egypt, the one who was responsible for the oppression and horrible treatment of the Israelites, is now dead. And yet their slavery continues! Some may have thought that things would have changed after he was no longer in charge. But it is clear that this is not the case. The people of Israel are still in slavery. So if we apply this truth to our lives today - how often do we buy into the belief that a certain leader or political party will be the answer to all of our problems?

Well, things at this point seem to be a bit hopeless! But we are at a turning point in our story!

Let's look at it again. They moaned and called for help. Their cry for help marked the change - their cry for help went up to God. Time and political change brought no improvement but prayer made all the difference. Psalm 18:6 reminds us that "in my distress, I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple, He heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears."

Let's look closely at v. 24 and 25.

**24** And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. **25** God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

So what was God's response to their cries for help?

God Heard

God Remembered

God Saw

God Knew

The prayer or cry for help of the people of God is truly the beginning of their deliverance which we find in Daniel 9:23

Jl Packer puts it this way in his book Knowing God - the turning point in this passage was not Pharaoh's death but God's Compassion for His people. Knowing God means being known by Him. His knowledge of us is deep, personal, and loving.

A few weeks ago Annie reviewed with us the tools of the ways we could study God's word through inductive bible study. Maybe some of you perhaps have already discovered this but If you look closely at the passage we studied today in vv.11-15 there are 16 verbs and Moses is the grammatical subject of 14 of them. But in vv 24-25 the action passes into the hands of God. It is He who intervenes. This is a beautiful reminder to all of us that true deliverance is not a result of human actions but comes only from a compassionate, loving God who hears, remembers, sees, and knows.

In your own life - are you suffering? - facing a difficult trial? Does it feel like you are alone and God is silent?

We can hold these four important truths in our heart and think upon them whenever we or another brother or sister need encouragement.

We can be confident that whatever the Lord may call any of us to, we may rest assured that his gracious preparation has made us exactly right for the task. Oh praise the Lord for this amazing reminder!

Well, such a joy, opening God's word with you today in Exodus, but before we wrap things up, I would like to share with you the rest of my story I started earlier in my talk. I

hope you will gain a better understanding of why this story of Moses resonated so much with me.

Here are some more details of my own journey as a saint, sufferer, and sinner. Let's go back to April of this past year and how I was dealing with the responsibility of helping my son and daughter in law care for Maisey. It was extremely challenging and scary at times ! But looking back, I now realize that I was not calling out to God but instead was relying on my own strength and limited medical knowledge and experiences. And something also started to happen. Pride began to creep into my heart. It felt good being the grandmother that was trained and could care for [Maisey](#). Until one night - when Maisey's parents were 40 minutes away enjoying a romantic dinner at their overnight birthday celebration - and I made a mistake when dosing her insulin and I over dosed her. When her parents rushed back, they realized what had happened, called an ambulance, and my sweet Maisey was rushed to a local hospital with the possibility of a medivac flight to a trauma center. As the ambulance took her away I was overcome with grief and fear in light of the mistake I had made! I cried out to the Lord for mercy and protection for her. When she arrived at the hospital my son texted me and shared that something miraculous had happened! Her blood sugar levels did not change and in fact did not change over the next six hours. The doctors had no explanation for this, but we all believed and knew that God protected Maisey that night! Thankfully - Maisey recovered very quickly - but I did not! I was so thankful she was ok but I was heartbroken because of my failure. For several weeks, I could barely sleep as

I replayed the story and the events over and over again in my mind. But on Easter morning, my son called me and told me that they wanted to share their miraculous story of how God protected Maisy with their extended family. I should have been rejoicing, but I was devastated! I was fearful, embarrassed and so concerned about what people would think of me and my failure. My pride was at it again! - I asked my son and daughter in law if we could talk before they shared their story. I told them how I had been wracked with guilt and shame over the trauma I had caused them and Maisy. And they were so surprised! They told me that they were thankful for that night because since then they were no longer filled with fear every time Maisy's blood sugar spiked or plummeted. This fear had been replaced with a peace that they knew only came from their faithful and loving savior. They said to me" This experience has been a gift to us because we now know that we are not responsible for Maisy's life - Jesus holds her life in His hands"

Dear sisters, even though this story was difficult for me to share with you today, my prayer is that the Lord will use this story and the story of Moses to strengthen your faith like he has strengthened mine and others in our family. I also hope it is an encouragement to you and reminds you that despite our failures and sins, Jesus hears, Jesus remembers, Jesus sees, and Jesus knows and is working in all of us to accomplish His perfect plan.

Paul Tripp sums it up beautifully - "God never calls us because we are worthy - he doesn't use us because we are able. He calls us because He is able and His grace is patient and His power is infinite. Your story and my story is far from over. Don't let guilt and regret make you a spiritual exile. Don't run away - run to him in all of your failures and weaknesses and watch what he will do."

Let's pray -

Dear Jesus - We thank you that you are a kind and loving savior who knows us deeply. We pray that we will run to you in all of our failures and weaknesses. We also pray that like Moses we would consider the reproach of Christ greater wealth than all the treasures of this world as we look forward to spending eternity with you.

Amen