

Nothing happens by chance

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[0 : 00] We shall now turn to this passage which we read together, the book of Exodus, chapter 2. And we could read verses 24 and 25, the last two verses of the chapter.

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them. The setting of what happened in this chapter is well known to all of us. You remember how Joseph had been sold by his brothers into Egypt, and then was able in Egypt to bring deliverance, not only to his brethren, but also to the whole land of Egypt.

When famine came upon the land, God used him in order to feed the Egyptians, and also his brethren and his parents.

And then you remember how Joseph's family came down with them to Egypt, and how they dwelt in the land of Goshen. And then the people of Israel multiplied there, and the years went by, and a king arose in Egypt, who didn't remember what had been done by Joseph for the deliverance of Egypt.

[1 : 45] And this king began to fear the large and growing number of the Israelites, that they might prove traitors, and turn against the Egyptians, and eventually oppose them, and overthrow the rule of the king of Egypt.

And therefore he tried to suppress them. First of all, he got them involved in building some of his cities, and he employed them as slave labor.

But instead of reducing their number and reducing their power, by employing them as slaves, Pharaoh found that rather they only grew in numbers.

So then he tried another plan. He got the two midwives of the Israelites together, and he commanded them that every male child was to be killed.

But the midwives feared God rather than him, and believed the commandment of God that they weren't to kill, and followed God's law rather than the laws of Pharaoh.

[2 : 51] And so Israel continued to multiply. So then Pharaoh tried something else. His plan was that every male child should be thrown into the river, into the Nile, and so be drowned.

And that was his law. And so that gives us the background of this chapter. The chapter begins by telling us how Moses was born.

And Moses, when his parents saw him, they recognized that there was something special about him.

They saw in him God's purpose, and so they tried to save him. They didn't want to throw him into the river.

They hid him for three months, and then when hiding him was no longer possible, his mother made an ark of bulrushes, put him in the ark, and put him down on the Nile River, and set his sister to watch.

[4 : 00] Pharaoh's daughter came down to watch herself, saw the child in the basket, had compassion on the child, and eventually Moses' mother is employed as a nurse to bring up the child, and Moses is brought up as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter.

And that leads on, of course, to the further, the things that were told about Moses later on in this book, how Moses was used by God as the saviour of Israel from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, bringing them to the promised land.

That's basically an outline of the story. Our duty, of course, is not just to know the stories of the Bible, but to try and see their significance for us, to ask ourselves what's their relevance for us. Why are we told this story in the Bible? What can we learn from it? What's the purpose behind it? What's as well the theology involved in a story such as this?

I think the first and basic lesson that we should draw from this tonight is that chance has no place in the lives of individuals.

[5 : 33] It's true that the Bible uses the word chance. It says, for example, in Ecclesiastes 9, verse 11, that time and chance happeneth to every man.

Time and chance comes to everyone. And then, too, we read in a book like the book of Ruth about certain things just as it were happening.

We're told there how Ruth came to glean in the field of Boaz. And the way it's put down in the Bible is her hap was to light upon a part of the land belonging to Boaz.

Her hap was to light upon a part of the land belonging to Boaz. Her chance, as it were, was to light upon this part of the land belonging to Boaz.

again, it's a strange way of speaking. As if it was just a matter of chance that she ended up gleaning in Boaz's field.

[6 : 42] And there are other similar passages to be found in the Bible. The Bible uses such language. It happened. It chanced. And we use them, of course, in our day-to-day language as well.

Our good fortune was this or our bad fortune was that or weren't we fortunate? Weren't we lucky? It chanced. It happened.

And so on. But was it a chance that Moses was born exactly at the time when he was born?

What's that chance? Think, for example, if Moses had been born earlier. His brother Aaron was older than Moses.

He had been born earlier and so he wasn't cast into the river. If Moses had been born earlier there would have been no threat upon his life and so he wouldn't have ended up in the basket on the river and he wouldn't have ended up in the palace of Pharaoh being taught in all the learning of the land of Egypt.

[7 : 51] Also if Moses had been born a little bit later he wouldn't have been thrown into the river either because it would seem that later on this law that Pharaoh had made was relaxed because we're told about other men like Joshua and lots of other men who were much younger than Moses born in the land of Egypt and yet they weren't cast into the river.

So this law of Pharaoh must have been relaxed as time went by. But Moses had to be born at exactly this point in time in order that Moses would fulfil the purpose of God end up in Pharaoh's palace learn the policies the ways of action the speech and all the rest of it of the Egyptians in order to be fully equipped to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

And then too Moses was born at the time when he needed to be born at the time when Israel needed to be saved.

We're told in verse 23 of this chapter that the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage. They cried and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage and God heard their groaning.

Their situation was one of misery and bondage and groaning in all their oppression. They were surely at the height of their bondage.

[9 : 33] They were at the end of their tether. the amazing thing is that it is often indeed it is usually at that very point in time when we are at our extremity that God acts.

I'm sure each one of you here every Christian here particularly would have found this to be true.

The very point in time when you were desperate you cried to God and the answer came dramatically.

The answer to prayer. How often that's true. God leaves us and leaves us until we find that we've got no resources left to us. Leaves us until we feel our own weakness to the full and until we realize that it's completely impossible for us to help ourselves and then we just as it were flopped down in the presence of God and God puts out his hand and lifts us up.

God always comes to us at the very point of our need and at that very point in time when we will realize that it was God's work and when we'll give him the praise and the glory for it.

No, it wasn't chance that Moses was born at that time. He was born at the very time when he was most needed. And then there was a chance that Moses appeared as a goodly child to his parents.

[11 : 15] When this child was born and they looked at their son, they saw that there was something special about him. He was a pretty baby, but I think it's much deeper than that.

Surely it's deeper than that. he was a goodly child. They saw that there was something special about him, something that distinguished him from all other children.

They could see in him the finger of God, and they could see that God had a purpose for this child of theirs. Surely there again we see the finger of God at work, revealing to Moses' parents that his child had a place in the plan of God and had to live.

And so we see his parents trying to save him. Was it chance that his parents tried to save him? Of course not. Moses couldn't have been allowed to die.

Moses must live. Moses had a place, had a work. Moses had a duty to perform. He was to be the saviour of Israel.

[12 : 28] Moses must live. And so Moses' parents tried to save him. And then was it chance that they were so successful in hiding him for three months?

You know how difficult it is to hide a child? You can't tell a child to be quiet. At the very moment when the agents of Pharaoh would be coming around, the police or the army or whoever it was, who could tell that the child wouldn't start crying at that very critical moment?

And everybody would find out. And Moses' parents die as well as Moses himself. How difficult it would be to hide a child. How hard it is to keep a child quiet at that very moment when you want them to be quiet.

How difficult it is to keep him from crying or to know when they're going to burst out crying. And yet they were successful. Why? Because of course God was working and God is sovereign and God could control a child and God could control when the child was going to cry and when the child was not going to cry.

Of course God can. We so often forget that God is almighty and that God plans and purposes everything. That he controls our lives.

[13 : 57] That God does everything. And so we find that in the providence of God this child was kept and hid for three months.

But then things were getting more difficult. And why were things getting more difficult? again was the purpose of God in that.

Moses wasn't going to be allowed just to hide as it were in the back room of his parents' house. God had a plan for Moses and Moses had to leave home and to go to live somewhere else.

And so Moses got more difficult for his parents. And they were finding that it was impossible for them to hide. And so we see them getting desperate.

And they think of the ark. And so they make this little basket of bulwashes and do it with slime and with pitch. And they cast the child into the river.

[15 : 06] Every male child that was to be born had to be cast into the river. And so Moses is thrown into the river as well. But there's a slight difference with Moses.

He's thrown into the river in a basket. And he's left there by the river's bank. And surely that, the very thought of the ark, is again an indicator, not of chance or luck or man's ingenuity, but of the leading and guiding of a sovereign God.

God. And then Pharaoh's daughter comes along. Was there anybody else in the land of Egypt who would save the child?

Was there anybody else in the land of Egypt who could? Well, no doubt Pharaoh could save the child. But what wish would Pharaoh have to save the child? He was the very one who had made the law that all Hebrew children should be cast into the river.

There was surely only one person in the land of Egypt who could, and might just possibly, save the child. And that was Pharaoh's daughter.

[16 : 26] The child is put in the basket at the river's bank, and lo and behold, out from the palace comes Pharaoh's daughter. Again, the hand of God is working.

The plan of God from all eternity is coming into action. Pharaoh's daughter comes down to the river to wash. She sees the ark, her curiosity is stimulated.

She sends her maidens for the basket, takes it over, sees the child. The child cries just at that moment, and her compassion is aroused.

The child breaks into tears. And her feeling of compassion has aroused. Was all that chance? Of course not. There we see again, the hand of God directing, leading, guiding, working in Pharaoh's daughter.

God doesn't just work in his own people. God works in the unconverted too. God shapes everybody's life. And even those who are most atheistic, and most opposed to God.

[17 : 42] God is there in their lives. God's making them do certain things, keeping them from doing other things, using them for the good of his church. That's one of the great things we see, for example, in a country like China, a country that was so hard against the gospel.

And you would think that when communism took over and when the missionaries from China were expelled from China, that that was the end of the church. But no, communism destroyed the other religions, the Confucianism, the Taoism of China, and left a great big vacuum and void into which Christianity came.

Communism can't destroy Christianity. And now there are a hundred times more Christians in China than there was twenty, thirty years ago when the communists took over.

The hand of God working through godless men. Our God is great. Our God is real. And our God is working.

Pharaoh's daughter comes down. The timing of God, we can see it. God working through Pharaoh's daughter. The providence of God in it all. And so Pharaoh's daughter decides to save his child.

[19 : 08] But it's not Pharaoh's daughter who decides to save the child. God had decided long, long before. He had a purpose for that child. And Pharaoh's daughter couldn't do anything else but have compassion on the child.

We see the merciful plan and purpose of God for his people Israel. And then there's Miriam down by the river's bank watching the ark.

A little girl. And she sees Pharaoh's daughter looking at the child.

How is it that this little girl Miriam should know exactly what to say? How is it that she would have the boldness and the courage? How is it that she could keep her face straight?

How is it that she could say it just in the right way? And in such a natural way, I'll find you a nurse for this child. Again we see the hand of God at work.

[20 : 18] Working through this little girl Miriam. And giving her the ability to say the thing. And giving her the right thing to say. So that Moses' mother is made the nurse for Moses.

And that of course was something vitally important. Moses would have been no use if he had not received a Hebrew upbringing as well as an Egyptian upbringing.

Moses had to retain his Egyptian roots, his Hebrew roots. otherwise he would be no use as the Savior of Israel. He had to be taught and brought up in the knowledge of the Lord God Jehovah.

He had to be instructed and he had to be trained in all the ways of God's people. And so we find his mother, the natural one, to bring him up in the ways of God.

Jesus' nurse. Was it a chance that Moses was also to receive a home in Pharaoh's palace?

[21 : 33] Was it a chance that he was to be trained in all the learning of the land of Egypt? Was it a chance that Moses was to know the Egyptian language and the Egyptian ways and the Egyptian culture and the ways of the court and have access to Pharaoh himself and know how things would be done?

Of course not. There was the training that God knew he would need in order to be the deliverer of his people Israel.

Is there any such thing as chance in the life of Moses? No. Definitely not. God is a sovereign God. He's a mighty God. And nothing happens by chance. There's no such thing as luck and fortune. We can use these terms. We can say as the Bible itself says, time and chance happeneth to every man.

We can say as it says of Ruth, her hap was to light upon a part of the field belonging to Boaz. us. We can say that it just happened.

[23 : 13] Wasn't I fortunate? And so on. There's no such thing as luck and fortune when we really think about it. And think seriously about it.

And look back in our lives. Surely stage by stage, step by step, we can see the amazing guidance of God. the hand of a sovereign God, leading us, directing us, bringing us step by step on along the way, and fulfilling his own purpose in our lives.

When things seem to be going wrong, when everything seems to be against you, remember that even then, all things work together for good to those who love God.

There are times in our life when we think that everything is in chaos, that everything is upside down, there's no way we can be sorted out. We're in such a mess, and everything gets on top of us, and we feel that we're just in a horrible, as the psalmist puts it, in a fearful pit, and in the mighty clay.

You know what it's like to be in a pit? You know what it's like to be in a bog, and your feet going under, and you're stuck, and you're squelching around, and you cannot get out? Sometimes we feel like that, but the sovereign God is the purpose for our lives, and even the fearful pit and the mighty clay is a place in our lives.

[25 : 01] All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Think of Esther, for example.

There she was, a girl, her parents died, brought up by her uncle. Very unfortunate girl in many ways.

Fortune seemed to be against her. That's the way you'd think of any little girl that was orphaned when she was young. But, it's amazing to see how the hand of God was even in that, brought up by her uncle, her uncle and her having this relationship with one another.

And then when Haman, with all his hatred against the Jewish people, got a law passed which would destroy the Jewish nation, that nation through whom the Messiah was to come, you can see how again the hand of God was at work, and how this woman Esther had a vital place to part to play in God's providence.

It was in chance that she ended up in the palace of King Ahasuerus. It was in chance that she was of all women that the king could have chosen, that she was the one that was chosen wife.

[26 : 34] That wasn't chance. It wasn't chance any of these things had happened. The way the king found out about the good deed that Mordecai had done, that wasn't chance.

It wasn't chance that when she broached the subject to the king that he decided to destroy Haman and save the Jewish people.

No, the hand of God was in all these things, working together along with all these little bits and pieces, interweaving them, interlocking them, bringing them into one unity.

Because God doesn't have many plans. He has only one plan. He doesn't have many decrees. There's only one decree of God. And it's all-encompassing.

It covers everything. And the great thing about it is that it's a plan of mercy and salvation for the people of God.

[27 : 42] We must believe, then, in a sovereign God. Hebrews 11 verse 23, By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

We must believe in a sovereign God. We must believe in a sovereign God that enabled his parents to see that he was a goodly child.

It was only by faith that they saw it. They couldn't have perceived it any other way, but by the gift of faith that God bestowed upon them. God had a purpose for it, and God saw to it that his parents would recognize that purpose and seek to save his life.

As far as we're concerned, it's only by faith that we can discern God's purpose for our lives. God has a purpose not just for great people like people like Moses, but God has a purpose for very ordinary people like you and me.

And it's only by faith that we see God's purpose and God's plan and are able to work it out and to rejoice in it. By faith they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

[29 : 07] Faith in God made them obey God rather than man and save the child alive. And so too with us, it's by faith that we obey God rather than man.

And we must put God first and not be afraid of the laughter and mockery of the world. God first. By faith they hid him. Surely they were attempting the impossible.

How on earth could they bring up a child? And the older the child would grow, the more difficult it would be to hide him. And then when he grew up into a little boy and into a man, everybody would know that he was born during the time when Pharaoh had said that no child should be kept alive.

Sometime they were going to be found out. They were trying the impossible. impossible. The great thing is that God is that God makes the impossible possible.

God is the one who enables us to do the things that reason tells us we cannot possibly do. It's just foolish to attempt it. God's grace enables us to do all things.

[30 : 29] what can we not do with the grace of God? My grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness.

You're weak but God is strong. And then too, by faith they made the ark.

it was a daring act of faith. But attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.

You can't be too daring if you're attempting something for God. And no matter how daring you are, there's a rich reward. God. Finally, it was by faith that Miriam was enabled to speak and to say the words that she did say.

Faith. Faith in God. Surely that's something that we need. Faith in a God is not weak, but in a God is mighty. In a God you can work in the hearts of our enemies.

[31 : 46] In a God you can transform other people's lives. In a God who can convert sinners. In a God who can do all things.

What can God not do? What can your God not do? Is there anything too great for God? Is there any limit on the creator of the heavens and the earth?

God God our prayer must be the prayer of the disciples. Lord, increase our faith. Our faith in a sovereign God who's made our lives, who's made them what they are, and who will continue to make them.

God grant us that we accept that he is sovereign, submit to his sovereign lordship over us, and seek more and more to trust in him and in him alone, and the one who works out all things together for the glory of his own name and the good of his own people.

God, let us pray. God, we praise thy name for thy sovereign mercy, for thy love and kindness, for thy care and compassion, for the fact that thou art in control of everything, and that thou art controlling it, not in a hard, harsh manner, but thou art controlling everything for our good and for thy glory.

[33 : 31] Lord, help us to submit to thee as a sovereign God and to trust in thee. For Jesus' sake, amen.