

# ***Shaping A Nation - Sending Help***

**Exodus 2:1-25**

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A mother was putting her little four-year-old daughter to bed for the night. The child was afraid of the dark. When the light was out, the child caught a glimpse of the moon outside the window. "Mommy," she asked, "is the moon God's light?" "Yes," the mother said.

Then the child asked, "Will God put out his light and go to sleep?" The mother replied, "No, dear, God never goes to sleep." "Well, as long as God is awake, there is no sense both of us staying awake."

And off to sleep she went.

God never sleeps.

God always helps.

I wonder if the people of Israel would have felt that way during the time of slavery. Yet, that is the story of *Exodus* - God preparing and sending help to His struggling people.

God prepared the way for the help to come.

God shaped the help.

God sends the help.

God gives effective power to the help.

And this - the help that God prepares, shapes, sends and empowers often has a very human shape to it. This chapter is a great example of that:

- Moses' mom & sister
- Pharaoh's daughter
- Moses

The greatest help of all history has a very human shape to Him:

- Jesus

God continues, in grace, to salt and pepper our world with help that has a human shape as he prepares the way, and shapes and sends us... and then makes our work for Christ powerful and effective.

Do you believe that about yourself?

Do you believe that the Lord may well be working in your life - preparing the way, shaping and sculpting your mind and heart and body through various relationships and circumstances and experiences so that He can send and empower you to do something unique and meaningful for His cause?

Some of you may already know that to be true.

Others of you may come to see that later.

But I declare today that it is true for everyone who is a believer in Jesus. There is a place and task and time for you to make a positive contribution to the cause of God here in this world. Watch for it. Pray for it.

Perhaps we don't realize it at the moment.

Perhaps we only see it looking back.

But it is the gospel truth.

Nobody is a nothing in God's plan.

How God shapes us and prepares us so that we can be help-givers is something we often only see looking back. Rarely do we realize it at the time.

But it happens.

Understand that as we consider the plight of the Hebrews - their story being part of our story for we are joined together as children of the Lord in one Old Testament // New Testament continuum of faith.

Theirs was a tragic time. Suffering and death so rampant. Their lives considered so insignificant by the Egyptians.

For all the world it seemed as if God had gone on extended vacation.

The truth, however, was quite different.

These suffering people could only see that years later when they looked back. Only years later could they connect the dots of all the amazing coincidences. I mean, go figure -

- that Moses' mother just *happened* to come up with the idea to put her son in the basket by the river;
- that Pharaoh's daughter just *happened* to be filled with pity for a little baby that she could quickly

have ordered removed and dispensed with;

- that this daughter just *happened* not only to take pity, but choose to adopt that baby and expose him to the royal court and all the resources and training that court had to offer.

- that Moses' brash and sinful act of murder led him into the desert and just *happened* to land him in the home of a priest, powerful figure, where he was granted a family and forty years of desert living experience caring for a bunch of dumb, stubborn sheep that behaved in ways not a lot different, say, from a whole bunch of newly freed slaves....say.

God worked with and made use of and shaped his coming help through all these events, situations and people.

Through it **ALL!**

That may be hard to believe - but it's true.

Probably is even harder to believe when we stop talking about some long-ago people and begin to think about our own lives.

But it is true there, too.

Through it **all** - God works and shapes and controls history.

The suffering of the many Hebrews was evil oppression by the power-toting Egyptians. No rationalizing it as good.

The murder of the baby boys was genocide at its worst, planned and executed by a maniacal emperor. To be mourned and resisted.

Moses' murder of the Egyptian was sin. Period.

His forced exile in the dessert and abrupt departure from the court must have been very hard for his step-mother princess to accept, breaking her heart.

But as was said by their ancestor Joseph some 400 years prior -

*"What may have been meant as evil, God turned to good."*

Indeed, the Lord picked up shattered pieces in the lives of people, scattered fragments from the carnage of sin, and shaped them to serve His purposes.

Nothing is wasted in the cause of the Kingdom.

Ever.

Can you hear that?

Nothing is wasted in the cause of the Kingdom of God.

**Ever.**

It's true here in Exodus 2.

It's also true in the great and central event of salvation history - the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God took the history of his forgetful, often wayward, genuinely stubborn, and oh-so-selfish people Israel and continued to shape, move and develop it to the time when the Saviour was born in Bethlehem; right during the time of the Pax Romana, when even the occupation of the oppressive gentiles was used to set the stage for the quick spread of Christianity through the communication and travel system put in place by Rome.

What the Jewish leaders meant for evil, and what Pilate in his sinful arrogance simply washed his hands of - the execution of Jesus - was taken by the Lord to become the destruction of Satan's power and the end of death's dominion over creation through the resurrection of the Son of God come to earth as a human.

Yes - nothing is wasted in the cause of the Kingdom of God.

And there, too, help was sent by God in human form.

His son become one of us.

Now we follow in faith.

Jesus says to us through John 20:21:

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, **so I send you.**"

We don't always understand.

We can't always see where and how God is shaping and planning.  
We don't comprehend the scope of how He will intervene in the diabolical plots of the Evil One; intervening to pick up the pieces and turn them to good.

As the sign out front says this week, "*Faith is something like driving in the fog.*"

You're going - but you can't see much further than right in front of you.

We're not going in a dangerous way.

For we have the promise of God that He will never leave us alone.

Says the prophet Isaiah, "*See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.*" (Is 49:16).

We have the promise of Scripture, "*Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you.*" (Hebrews 13:5).

Like a heavenly GPS guidance system attached to the rudder of our lives, God's ever present power guides us through the fog of uncertainty which sometimes surrounds us.

Nothing is ever wasted.

It is not wasted when tragedy strikes. Even in the fog of pain and tears, please believe that. I remember having the hardest time trying to even listen to those words after our son died. How could that be for good?

A stupid syndrome, undescribed and mysterious.... for good?

And to this day I can't tell you **why** it happened.

But this I **can** say - a whole bunch of you have commented how you find that funeral services here at Calvin are a blessing, a source of comfort and hope. Without going into too much detail, let me tell you that it is a direct result of what I did and in some ways did not experience when we travelled the valley of the shadow of death.

Nothing is ever wasted in the cause of the kingdom.

It is not wasted when tragedy strikes.

It is not wasted when sin creeps in.

We may take wrong turns. We may make wrong decisions. We may rebel. But God doesn't let any of that go wasted. Remember how Pharaoh's sin of murder led to the eventual leader of Israel receiving training in his own court. Remember how Moses' murder led to him getting on the job desert survival training in Midian, the very place where Israel would later wander.

Nothing is ever wasted in the cause of the Kingdom.

In her book *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells of tense times in Holland during the time of the German invasion. One night Corrie tossed restlessly in her bed as war planes roared overhead, shattering the blackness with fiery artillery. Hearing her sister downstairs in the kitchen, and unable to sleep, she went downstairs for a cup of tea. She and her sister talked until the night was quiet again and the sound of the fighter planes had died away. Explosions had ripped nearby, but now all was quiet.

Groping through the darkness to her room, Corrie reached out her hand to pat her pillow before lying down. Suddenly she felt something sharp cutting her hand. It was a jagged piece of metal ten inches long -- a piece of shrapnel from an exploded bomb.

Corrie said to her sister, "Betsy, if I had not heard you in the kitchen..." To which her sister replied, "Don't say it, Corrie! There are no IFs in God's world. The center of his will is our safety."

Martin Luther once remarked that faith is saying, "*Nevertheless.....!*"

I will experience tragedy.

I will make wrong turns.

I will make dumb choices.

I will engage in outright sin.

Large forces may oppose me.

**Nevertheless....** God remains in control.

We'll hear shortly from someone working in a communist land where Christian witness is tightly controlled. **Nevertheless**, the Church is growing in that land at a staggering rate.

The setting in which she hoped to work has been held back for a long time. **Nevertheless**, she is able to serve in the cause for which she gave her life.

In all of that, this is true:

*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39).*

As true as this is true:

*all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28)*

And as true as this is true:

*we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. (Rom 8:37)*

The timing and shape of it we don't see.

That it becomes part of God's training plan, sometimes with sweat and sacrifice and tears, is something we have to come to accept.

And more about that tonight as we consider the life of Jonah.

But God *DOES* and *WILL* bring history together.

Nothing is wasted.

For those in despair, help is on the way.

Generally coming in very human form.

Perhaps....

....could it be?

....even looking

like

us.

The great preacher Dwight L. Moody said this about Moses -

"Moses spend his first forty years thinking he was somebody. He spend his second forty years learning he was a nobody. He spent his third forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody."

Last week we heard about the Micah Challenge.

And in future weeks you'll hear more.

You were invited to go to the CRWRC web site - [www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org)

They are one of the partner agencies in this Challenge to the churches to take seriously the desperate plight of so many in our world.

Listen when representatives speak.

Read the material that comes to you.

Consider - is God shaping you to be part of His plan of help to the suffering in our world, even as Moses' mom and the Egyptian Princess and Moses' sister all had a role to play?

Maybe a big role.

Maybe a smaller role.

But some sort of a role - what is waiting for you? What sort of role of help to the lonely, the imprisoned, the hungry, the addicted, the elderly, the sick, the depressed, the unbeliever?

What sort of helping role can you play as a way of saying "*Thanks*" to the Greatest Human Helper of All — who gave his absolute all so that you can be guaranteed an eternal inheritance with the Lord?

As a little gathering of nobodies, huddled in the middle of Ottawa,

brothers and sisters,

what can

what will

what **IS**

God doing with, in and through us in a ministry of help?

Someone once said, "Feed your faith and your fears will starve to death."

The opposite is also true, "Feed your fears and your faith will starve to death."

The future is unknown for all of us.

The swirl of the present - its direction and meaning - even that is often unknown.

What is unknown can very easily be a source of fear, just like the darkness for the little girl sitting with her mom, watching the moon.

The question for us,  
as we remember that God never puts out his light and goes to sleep,  
the question is -  
Will we live and act out of faith, or out of fear?