

CHAPTER 2:1-10 PASSING DOWN THE BATON OF FAITH – BEHOLDING PROVIDENCE AT WORK

Chapter Structure

- vv. 1 - 4 Faith of Man in Action
- vv. 5 - 10 Providence of God in Action

Spiritual Principles:

- P1: Putting faith in Action will open our eyes to see God in Action.

A. Last Week...

Pharaoh was blind to the divine power he was battling against and was determined to kill all Hebrew baby boys. He issued a public order to drown all Hebrew baby boys as soon as they were born.

- 1) Living in a Pagan Environment. Many passages in the Bible tell us that after living in Egypt for nearly 350 years, the Hebrew people had followed the Egyptian way of idolatry and worshipped the gods of Egypt. Joshua's final words to the Hebrew people in Jos 24:14 were "*throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD*". Another place in the Bible is Ezekiel 20:7 "*Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.*" These tell us that not only had they brought the Egyptian idolatry with them into the wilderness, into the Promised Land and even into Exile. Knowing this background, we would not be surprised at the incident of the golden calf, the grumbling and the apostasy in the wilderness.

It seems that the Egyptians were not the only one that were forgetful and ungrateful. The Israelites were also forgetful and ungrateful to God who delivered them from the great famine. But we need to take note there was no written scriptures at that time; nor was there a central place of worship for the Israelites in Egypt. Without these, oral traditions could easily be distorted and lost. (This is why our church develops a literature ministry so that we can pass on that baton of our faith to the coming generations) Today in the NT, we have the complete revelation of God - the Bible, a rich heritage of spiritual writings, and we also have the pastoral care of the church, yet many of us do not give the matters of faith the highest importance in our pilgrim life. So, as we journey together in this study, let us remind one another not to belittle the Israelites' folly and sins but to see our own reflection in them.

- 2) A Godly Remnant. Throughout history, no matter how harsh and hopeless the situation were, God always preserved for Himself a group of people who refused to conform to the idolatry of the world they lived in. For example When Prophet Elijah was pursued by Queen Jezebel and was disheartened by loneliness, God encouraged him, "*Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.*" (1Ki 19:18). In the NT time when Jesus was born, God preserved for Himself some

people such as Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna...etc. "*who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*" Even after 400 years of divine silence. (Luke 2:38),

God has also preserved a remnant among the Hebrews in Egypt over the centuries. Despite the prosperous life in Egypt, they remembered the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and His promise for them to build a great nation in a land flowing with milk and honey. Among these remnants were one Levites couple, Amram and Jochebed. They had a son, Aaron, and a daughter, Miriam, and it was during the time of the evil decree that Jochebed was pregnant. We can imagine how earnestly the family must be praying to God, "Let it be a girl".

B. Faith of Man In Action vv.1-4

1. They Believed In God's Deliverance

But she gave birth to a son. And "*When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.*" (v.2)

In Acts 7:20 and Hebrews 11:23 described Moses with the Greek word "asteios" which is used to describe an elegant, comely and fine city. It means "no ordinary". The Hebrew passage pointed out that "*By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*" So this is how we understood it: through their faith the Holy Spirit opened their eyes to see something extraordinary in this baby. How did they respond to the Holy Spirit? they were not afraid of the king's edict and the entire family risked their lives and hid him for three months, until they could not hide him any longer.

Dear brothers and sisters, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit marks you as a man of God because you can now have the communion and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If you quench the Holy Spirit, then though you are a man of God you are not of the Spirit. On the other hand, if you follow the guidance and prompting of the Holy Spirit, then you are of the Spirit. How you respond to the Holy Spirit determines whether you are a spiritual person.

2. Respond to the Holy Spirit

They decided to put Moses in a basket and placed him by the river, and unto God's delivering hand they committed him.

In a parallel account of the ancient literature, the king Sargon of Akkad was born to a priestess who placed him in a reed basket on the Euphrates river, and he was found by a poor canal worker named Akki, who raised him as his son. This proves that placing unwanted children in a basket by the river was not an uncommon practice for abandoning babies in the ancient world. It is like placing an unwanted baby at the doorstep of a church or a hospital during our ancestors' time.

God did not instruct Moses' parents in words. Neither did He send a prophet to speak to them. How did they know this was the right thing to do? This is what we call spiritual discernment, and spiritual discernment is a lifelong spiritual lesson for every Christian in all generations. We believed that Jochebed must have called out to the Lord earnestly and constantly during these three months. She must have tried her best to explore ways for Moses to live in a non-Hebrew family. Clearly, her decision to commit him onto God's hand showed that she realized only God can deliver him out of Pharaoh's brutal sword.

Verse 3 said that she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch to make it waterproof. The word Moses used to describe the basket is the same word as Noah's ark. This basket is the ark that saved Moses from the flood of the river.

Because Jochebed believed that God would save Moses, so she actively planned and worked towards it. She made a well-designed water-proof basket for him. She placed him at an unnoticeable corner and sent her daughter to check on him. These actions are actions of living faith.

To trust God does not mean we do nothing except praying. To trust God means that we are not to be paralysed by fear but to actively doing what ought to be done, because God's desire is for us to live in hope and not fear. So, for example, when we pray for protection from COVID-19, we must also make an effort to comply with the safety measures advised by people with expertise. When we pray for our examination, we must also be diligent in revising for the paper because God wants us to learn well. Praying, committing our needs to God and doing what we ought to do are actions of living faith.

C. Providence of God in Action vv. 5-10

1. God Directed Pharaoh's daughter

5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

The God who guided Amram and Jochebed also worked all things for the survival of Moses. Firstly, He directed Pharaoh's daughter to come to the river at this very moment to this very spot where the basket was placed. Then God opened her eyes to notice the cleverly designed and carefully constructed papyrus basket. Then God stirred up her curiosity and asked her maidservants to bring it to her. Then God caused the baby to cry when the basket was opened. Instead of being irritated by the cries and the tears of the baby, God filled her heart with so much compassion that *she felt sorry for him v.7* - the word sorry is translated from the Hebrew word *chamal*, which means to spare or to be responsible. The princess felt responsible to protect the baby, to spare him from fear and hunger and death. She knew "*this is one of the Hebrew babies*" to be drown to death. But

the LORD caused her heart to be courageous to act against her father's decree. Here we see that even *"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will."* (Prov 21:1)

The Lord Jesus told us to *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* (Mat 6:33) Today, many mothers have to work to make ends meet and their young children were left in the hands of the childcare centre. Many pastors and spiritual leaders could not give attention their children need at times. God is faithful. Let us learn from Amram and Jochebed, commit our children to the LORD as early as when the child is conceived in the womb, for no power can snatch them from the hands of God.

2. God's Reward for Jochebed

"Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" (v. 7)

God also worked on Mariam. He filled her with extra portion of wisdom and courage to make an exceedingly smart offer, at the right time in the right way, in such a way that the Pharaoh's daughter had no suspicion of her relationship with the baby at all.

"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." (v.9)

God's wonderful and perfect providence not only preserved Moses's life but granted Jochebed to keep him and nurse him for three years, with an added bonus - she was paid for nursing her own child!

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us," (Eph 3:20)

Under the lead of Jochebed, the whole family, include Mariam and Aaron was able to see the perfect and wonderful Providence of God! This is one of the stewardship of parenting, that in every crisis lead your child to experience God's faithfulness and see His Providential hands at work.

P1: Putting faith in Action will open our eyes to see God in Action

The most important provision in God's Providence was for Jochebed to have the first two to three years of Moses' life. Educationists believed that the first two-three years of a child is as mouldable as wet cement. Jochebed might not have such knowledge, but being a faithful steward, she spared no time to wean Moses on the promises of the LORD – *"And they shall come back here in the fourth generation... "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."* (Ge 15:16-21)

When it was time for Moses to wean off milk, *“she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses,”* (v.10) even though she brought Moses to Pharaoh’s daughter, in the heart of this godly mother, she committed Moses to God once again. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jochebed’s teaching had long lasting influence on Moses’ relationship with God. Despite having great abilities and knowledges, Moses treasured his identity as Jehovah’s chosen people more than the position of the prince of Egypt:

“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.” (Heb 11:24,25)

Moses became an important vessel that God used – He led the Israelites out of Egypt, received the Law, built the tabernacle of God. Even though Jochebed did not enter the Promised Land, her faithful stewardship prepared her son well for God’s calling. And this is her portion in the great salvation plan of God for Israel and for mankind. This is her reward.

3. God’s Foundational Training for Moses

The Bible said that Moses *“was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.”* (Acts 7:22)

It was in the palace of Egypt that Moses received the best education and best technologies of the time. This is the first stage of the training programme God had in store for Moses, so that he might become a vessel God can use to lead His people out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

Every experience of a Christian is useful, including those acquired before conversion. They are God’s preparation for us so that we may live to His purpose and our lives may be of eternal value.

D. Closing

Not only had Jochebed’s faith kept Moses alive, but it also led him to know God His creator and redeemer and to serve Him faithfully. There are other examples of men of great faith in the Bible, who had mothers faithfully passing down the baton of faith to them, such as Samuel and his mother Hanna, Timothy and his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois.

We cannot pass on our faith, faith is effected by the sovereign power of God through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. But we can pass on the baton of faith, and this is the evangelism duty of every Christian parent. It is also the foremost duty of parenting. Thus this is also the most important criterion for choosing a nanny or a childcare centre to care for our child. A Christian home with three or more generations is God’s great gift for your children and you must thank God for it. Together parents and grandparents ought to pass on the baton of faith to the inheritance of God faithfully .

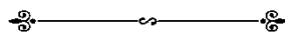
How can you pass on the baton of faith? Please get a copy of the book "Parenting for Eternity" by Rev J.C.Ryle from the church bookstore. It provides seventeen spiritual principles that will effectively and successfully train your child to take on the baton of faith. You may also consider doing the followings with your children:

- a) Read Bible together daily
- b) Pray together daily
- c) Go to church together on Sunday, except when he is sick
- d) Talk to your children about God’s work, especially those in your personal life
- e) During family crisis lead your children to cry out to God as a family
- f) Do not hide your crying tears from your children. Let them see how you cry out to God and how He delivers you.
- g) You may have a book of prayer where you record your family prayers and when God answers each of them.
- h) Bring your children along to the church’s Thanksgiving meeting to witness the wonderful work of our Lord in other’s life.

Most importantly, Jochebed reminds us that parents need to build up our faith in God so that we may be able to discern God’s will. Only then do we have the conviction and strength to persevere in passing on the truth, the Christian worldview, godly principles and right priority of life to our children.

Every Christian pilgrimage begins at the moment of birth, and therefore it is also where parenting for eternity should begin. Only then can we confidently hand them over to God on the day of their Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, as Jochebed did when she brought Moses into the palace. Yes, we may stumble and loose our foothold at times on parenting, but as long as we do our best God will complete the rest for us, because He is co-working with us in every Gospel work near or far, as He promised in Mark 16:20. Yes, in God’s perfect salvation there is perfect Providence!

“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.” (Mark 16:20)



The Renewing of the mind:
