

Lesson 37
The Courage of Faith
Hebrews 11:23

Who are Amram and Jochebed? You say, "I never heard of them." They may be obscure people to you and me but they are precious saints in the sight of God, for He thought enough of them to put them in the believer's hall of fame. Amram and Jochebed were the parents of Moses. Thus far in the Book of Hebrews, Chapter 11, all the saints mentioned are well-known characters - Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph - but Amram and Jochebed are unfamiliar names; yet they exercised great faith in God, and God thought their faith so significant that He recorded it in Holy Scripture.

Amram and Jochebed were common folks but they were mightily used of God to accomplish His purposes. They are an example of persevering faith in God, which gives one great courage and causes him to do what he would not normally do. Persevering faith is courageous in suffering, hardships and tribulations so that one accomplishes things that seem humanly impossible.

Hebrews 11:23 says, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Hebrews 11 takes us back to Exodus 1-2 for the historical incident.

THE CRUELTY OF PHARAOH - Exodus 1:6-12-22

"And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them." -- Under Joseph, who was the prime minister of Egypt, the Israelites prospered materially and numerically, so much so that they became an influential source in the culture of Egypt.

"Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." -- A new dynasty of pharaohs came to power, probably a foreigner who had conquered Egypt, and he was not favorable towards the Israelites because "he did not know Joseph." They went from freemen to slaves in a matter of a few years.

Nations rise and fall like the sun in God's sovereign purpose and this in turn affects man's circumstances. One day we may be experiencing great freedom and blessing and the next day find ourselves slaves.

"He removes kings and establishes kings ..." (Daniel 2:21b)

"Behold, the nations are like a drop from the bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales... All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless" (Isa. 40:15, 17).

“And he said to the people, ‘Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land.’ So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities. Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.” -- The more Pharaoh displayed cruelty and afflicted the children of Israel, the more they multiplied and grew. God’s plans cannot be frustrated by men, not even kings.

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the LORD , it will stand” (Prov. 19:21).

“The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation” (Psalm 33:10-11).

“Then Pharaoh commanded all his people saying, ‘Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.’ -- Pharaoh’s cruelty was climaxed in that he made a proclamation that all of the male infants born into Israelite homes were to be drowned. It was during this time that Moses was born and his young life was threatened with extinction by a tyrannical, cruel ruler.

THE COURAGE OF MOSES’ PARENTS - Exodus 2:1-4

“Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.” -- When Israel was groveling in slavery in Egypt, just two ordinary, common people got married. They were Amram and Jochebed who gave birth to Moses. ***“And the name of Amram’s wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram: Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam”*** (Num. 26:59).

“And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.” -- From the account in Exodus we might conclude that only Jochebed, Moses’ mother, exercised faith and hid Moses for three months so that he would not be killed, but Hebrews tells us clearly that both of the parents were involved in this great act of faith. At great cost to their own safety and with their very lives at stake, Amram and Jochebed refused to obey the Pharaoh’s command and hid the child Moses. By faith these parents displayed great courage and boldness which enabled them to overcome the fear of man, even when it meant the certain death of their son and themselves. We learn from these parents that real faith operates in spite of adversity.

We are told in Exodus and Hebrews that the baby Moses was “beautiful” and in Acts 7:20 it says the child was “lovely.” Was it Moses’ beauty that caused the parents to hide him? I think not, but it was their faith in the living God that caused them to do this mighty act. Amram and Jochebed were true believers and knew of God’s promises and predictions that Israel would be delivered out of Egypt.

“And God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterwards they will come out with many possessions’” (Gen. 15:13-14).

“And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob’” (Gen. 50:24).

They believed that the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning the promised land would come to pass. While the record does not state specifically, it could well be that Amram and Jochebed were given a direct revelation from God that Moses had a special destiny among the people of God. Whatever the means, Moses’ parents knew that Moses was ***“lovely unto God”*** (Acts 7:20) and that he had a special place in God’s program. The point of significance is that it was not primarily because of his external beauty or their natural affections towards Moses that his parents hid him, but it was because of their faith -- they believed God! They trusted God for a humanly impossible situation and God supernaturally took care of the situation.

Notice carefully that Amram and Jochebed exercised faith and acted because true faith always acts. Faith is not sitting around twiddling our thumbs waiting for something to happen. In fact, that kind of a concept of faith is fatalism. Faith works, faith acts, and faith is doing something now, for faith is acting upon the promises of God now!

“But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it, and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.” -- We are not told why the parents could no longer hide the baby Moses, but perhaps his crying became too loud or some fifth columnist was about to report the child to the authorities.

It took great faith for Jochebed to put her child in the little ark in the high grass at the bank of the river. She was believing God but she also probably knew that Pharaoh’s daughter came regularly to that area to bathe and she was believing God for a supernatural intervention, even though humanly it seemed as though Moses would be put to death.

“And his sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.” -- This is a beautiful picture of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility working side by side. Jochebed was expecting a supernatural intervention but she sent Miriam, Moses’ sister, to see how it would all turn out and perhaps do something about the situation.

THE CONCERN OF JOCHEBED - Exodus 2:5-10

“Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children.’” -- Humanly speaking, Pharaoh’s daughter should have thrown Moses in the Nile because the king had commanded this, but God has control even over the hearts of royalty and can change their thinking. ***“The king’s***

heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes
(Prov. 21:1). God alone can soften an unbeliever's heart.

“Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?’ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Go ahead.’ So the girl went and called the child’s mother. Then Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you wages.’ So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, ‘Because I drew him out of the water.’” -- God, because He is all powerful, overrules even the edicts of kings and makes a mockery of the wisdom of the world. Pharaoh meant to kill Moses but God in turn had Pharaoh pay for the upbringing of Moses by his parents. God’s ways are not our ways and we must trust Him to do the impossible, for God is a supernatural working God.

Have you ever asked yourself, “Where did Moses get his information about God, His covenants and His people, Israel?” He undoubtedly received most of it from Amram and Jochebed. The Bible does not tell us how long the boy Moses and his mother were together. The important thing to note is that the parents of Moses, especially his mother, were together with him long enough so that she could communicate her faith to him. She undoubtedly told him about the true God and about the chosen people of Israel and the circumstances surrounding his own birth. I can imagine that she repeated over and over again to Moses how God had been faithful in delivering him from certain death at the hands of Pharaoh.

As Moses grew older, he was trained in the best secular schools in Egypt, and most of what he learned was contrary to what his parents had taught him. Often, probably, Amram’s and Jochebed’s hearts ached with concern and fear that Moses would reject his early training, but he did not because God, in His sovereignty, opened Moses’ heart and he attended to the things his parents taught him. I’m confident that Amram and Jochebed never stopped praying for Moses because their confidence was in their covenant-keeping God who could do the humanly impossible. Apparently Moses did not come out loud and clear for God until his late twenties or early thirties. Perhaps he was struggling through all his secular training. ***“And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds”*** (Acts 7:22).

APPLICATIONS TO CHRISTIANS

Courage and Confidence

God takes plain, common and ordinary folks to get His plans and purposes accomplished. When we exercise persevering faith we become bold and courageous in spite of our weaknesses and God uses us for His own glory. Most of us will never be intellectual scholars and theological giants, although we should be constantly seeking to gain more understanding of Scripture, but we can all be great men and women of faith. We may not be fully educated; we may not be recognized leaders in the church, but we all can have an intensely meaningful and practical faith. We may not be able to explain every problem passage in the Bible, but we can be faithful to God, committed to the Lord and in love with the Savior.

Concern

As people of a practical, living faith in Christ, we must have concern for others. This is especially true of Christian parents for their children. What kind of faith are we passing on to our children? What kind of concept of God are our children picking up from us? Do our children see the reality of Christ in us? Proverbs 22:6 says, ***“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”*** This training not only includes teaching our children the Bible and the catechism, but the words “train up” have three other connotations: 1) Dedicate: We must dedicate our children to God and trust God to work a work of grace in their hearts to save them. 2) Discipline: We must teach our children to have a submissive spirit, for if they do not submit to human authority, they most likely will never submit to God’s authority. 3) Desire: We must create a desire, a hunger and a thirst in a child for spiritual things. How do we do this? By having a life of faith and dependence upon the living God and allowing Christ to radiate from our lives. Is your Christian life attractive to your children? Do they know you have something they don’t have? Do they know that Christ makes you a real person with concern? Proverbs 22:6 does not guarantee the salvation of our children. In fact, there is not one verse in the whole Bible that guarantees our children will be saved, but there are many verses that speak of our human responsibility to raise our children, and if we do these things, we are more likely to see God work sovereign grace in our children.

One Sunday our church was blessed by the ministry of Dr. John Sanderson. That afternoon my wife and I went to dinner with Dr. Sanderson. In the course of the conversation, he told us about his son, David, who was 33 years old and a rejecter of the gospel. He said that at one time, when he was younger, David professed to believe and then threw it all over because it was not real to him. I asked Dr. Sanderson why he thought it had happened and he replied, “I assumed my son was a Christian because he could quote the Bible and the catechism and went through the external motions of Christianity, but now I know his heart was far from God.” Then I asked him what he would do differently if he had it to do all over again. He said, “I would set a better Christian example and allow the life of Christ to shine through me more to my son that he might know that God works supernaturally.” That was Dr. Sanderson’s way of saying he would make Christ more attractive through his own life. I was greatly touched with his sincerity and I put my hand on his arm and said, “Dr. Sanderson, Augustine was 32 when he was converted so it is not too late for your son.” He replied immediately, “Yes, and John Wesley was 38 when he was converted and I am still praying for my son.”

CONCLUSION

For you without Christ as Lord and Savior, I want to make it very clear to you that you can never know a supernatural working God until you place your faith in Jesus Christ and experience the supernatural new birth. The Bible tells you that you must see yourself as a sinner, separated from God and under God’s wrath. Then you must “by faith” trust Christ to save you from your sins.

Only Christ can give you the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He alone can bring meaning and purpose to your life. Won’t you bow your will to Jesus and accept Him as your Lord and

Savior?