

Hebrews 11v23 (Exodus 2v1-10)

By faith... not afraid

15th November 2020 Hill and Arcadia am live streamed

There are many things that **scare us**. Carol has always been afraid of snakes; my youngest daughter is scared of geckos. We people are sometimes afraid of certain things, people and circumstances because we feel they are a threat to us.

Recent legislation regarding **marriage officers** being forced to marry same sex couples had me scared for a while. The threat of the legal process ending up in prison crossed my mind.

Most of realize that some of our fears are not really a threat to us but then there are others that **may result in** us being injured or may even end up in us dying.

More and more it is becoming apparent that Bible believing Christians are being and will be **marginalized and persecuted** for not conforming to secular cultural trends.

Holding on to creation, the exclusivity of the gospel for salvation, marriage between a natural man and a natural woman... will all put a target on your back. And that can be scary and may leave you feeling afraid.

The recipients of this letter had already *Hebrews 10:32 ...endured a hard struggle with sufferings. 33 sometimes being publically exposed to reproach and affliction ...the plundering of their property...*

Having already faced those kinds of scary circumstances **it is likely** that some of them were still afraid.

And therefore the temptation and consideration to go back to **the safety of Judaism** to escape the victimization and persecution that followers of Jesus were facing.

God directs the author of Hebrews to include a well-known historical event to encourage them in the way that their fears may be addressed.

He digs back into the archives of the nation's history to a time when a mother and father faced the prospect of having the governing authorities **forcibly removing** their baby son to be drowned in the Nile River.

Can you **imagine** anything worse than seeing helpless infants with all the potential of life ahead, been choked to death? There only thing worse than that is to see your own beautiful little baby grabbed from your arms and drowned like an unwanted rat.

Like those parents there are times that many of us **get scared** and fear for our lives or for the lives of our loved ones.

1 People are often in situations where they are afraid

Do not **underestimate** the extent of fear that these Hebrews faced under the government of the day. The taskmasters *afflicted them with heavy burdens (1v11). They*

ruthlessly made them work as slaves (1v13) and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick (1v14).

And then **the order to the midwives** was issued; *Exodus 1:16 "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birth stool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live."*

And when that **was not effective** enough in reducing the Hebrew population, *Exodus 1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."*

These Hebrews must have been at the wits end. Surely they must have felt so desperately **helpless and confused and scared**. They were recipients of the promises of God and yet they were victims of injustice. They were the under dogs and losers.

Among us **here at Central** there are some who are also feeling helpless and confused and scared.

Growing fear regarding the political uncertainty in our country is spreading like gangrene.

Sadly the colour of people's skin remains a discriminating tool **fostering fear**; some families are anxious that their children are still getting inferior education perpetuating cycles of poverty and some families are afraid that there are no job opportunities for their children.

Men and women approaching **pensionable age** scared that they will lose their pensions will be looted and end up not having resources to live into their old age.

As I mentioned in the introduction there is a growing antagonism toward **Bible believing Christians**; stirring uncertainty and fear as to future persecution and victimization.

Serious illness stirs fear regarding **death and dying**.

Realistically, unless Jesus returns, you and I can expect for various reasons to find ourselves in situations that can make us scared; with fear so easily nagging and gnawing away at your soul.

The intended **encouragement** from the author is to show that there is no need to be left in the pit of anxiety and fear. We can learn from those who have gone before us who...

2 Addressed their fear with faith

There is **no direct mention of faith** in these verses in Genesis we have just read. In fact there is no direct mention of God either. But these parents, we are told, by the writer to the Hebrews had faith.

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

These parents were **not optimistic** positive thinkers – their circumstances ruled that out as an option. They had faith which means they believed what God had said and were not afraid of the king's scheme to do away with all the new born boy.

They knew that **God had promised** to deliver their people from slavery and to take them back to the land of Canaan. *Genesis 17:8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*

This **promise is repeated** in some form or another in *Genesis 26:3, Genesis 35:12, Genesis 46:4, Genesis 48:2.*

It was known among them **what Joseph** had said on his death bed *Genesis 50:24 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."*

These parents had **something more and specific** from God. They already knew at the time of his birth that this was no ordinary child. *Exodus 2:2 the woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.*

Some translations use the word beautiful child, others goodly or faith conveying the sense that this was **no ordinary child**.

There must have been some **special revelation** from God about this child who would be used in a special way to bring about the promised deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

God had revealed to them that this child would be raised up to **fulfil a specific role** in the unfolding purposes of God.

The point is that they believed God even when looking at their circumstances that **rationally** or **logically** it did not seem possible. They believed God when humanly speaking there was no hope for their son's survival.

They had **faith** which did not remain passive. They acted. They did something. Their faith moved them to act. They hid the baby for a while but then devised a plan.

Instead of taking him as far from the Nile as possible, since that was **the place of execution**; they made a little basket and hid him among the reeds in the Nile

Exodus 2:3 When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.

They did all they could but then stood back and **then entrusted** their little one to God. *Exodus 2:4 And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.*

There is no doubt that **faith** is about believing God – taking God at his word. But faith is never alone. It is always accompanied by works.

These **trembling parents** whose hearts must have been breaking (like some among us today) did something but at the same time were constantly trusting God.

They did what they could in the circumstances but then **backed off** leaving their little one in the hands of God.

Many of us will confess that reaching the point of **simply trusting God** after doing all responsibly can do is the hard part. What is it about God that made these parents back off and wait?

They knew that beyond the king's edict to drown new born baby boys and beyond his desire to perpetuate lucrative but cruel slavery, **God is at work** all his purposes to perform.

3 The invisible hand of God

Whether you are aware of it or not each one of us considers what we see around us and constantly draw conclusions **on the basis of the spectacles** we are wearing.

It is called **your worldview**. It is the way you interpret and understand every circumstance and event of history.

There are **2 types of spectacles**. One which makes you see everything as mere chance. Every day you long for strokes of good luck with you or others calling the shots.

The other type of spectacle helps you see in everything that God has a plan and that God is intimately involved in the details of history to accomplish his every purpose.

Looking at this kind of passage **begs the question**; was Moses the recipient of a stroke of good fortune or was the sovereign hand of God guiding and governing the universe he created and continues to sustain?

Moses in a basket in the river of death... The sister standing at a distance watching... The daughter of Pharaoh coming to bath on that day at that time at that place... the princess seeing the basket just then.... her taking pity on the child... The princess' openness to the sister's suggestion...

Is this all of this pure chance or is it **the invisible purposeful hand of God** at work?

We have **a name** for this invisible purposeful hand of God at work – we call it providence.

3.1 The providence of God

The providence of God means that **God sees beforehand and plans accordingly**.

God sees beforehand everything that's going to happen in your life. He goes ahead and prepares things so that "*all things*" fit into his purpose for you.

That is **providence**. It is God seeing ahead of time what is going to happen and plans accordingly so that when it happens it will fit into his plan – no matter what!

If you prefer the **chance lens** with people ultimately in control you need to get ready for a life of despair and hopeless regret...

If you believe the Bible and wear the **providence lens** with God in control you can live a life of peace. Peace even when things and people and circumstances seem to be against you.

I want to urge you to deliberately go with **the providence lens**. It is what we see from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

Joseph reminded his brothers of this truth. *Genesis 45:4 So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*

They were **slow in learning** and so he repeats...

Genesis 50:19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Jesus death on the cross is another wonderful example of God's invisible purposeful hand at work *Acts 2:23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

Wherever you are, whatever you have to face is not just the luck of the draw. God is at work and **if you are a believer** will be for your good. *Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

What about all **the other parents** who did not see their precious little boys saved?

3.2 Asking the hard question

I don't want you to leave here today having **the impression** that all you need in the midst of your indescribable heartache is a dash of incredible faith and all will be well.

Moses was **the exception** and not the rule. Moses was saved and many other infants were killed. We see similar patterns today:

- Here and there **a barren woman** bears a child but some remain infertile and childless.

- Here and there someone is miraculously healed from a **terminal disease** but most die prematurely.
- Here and there **elderly people** stay well to the end but most have to endure a long struggle of incapacity and discomfort.
- Here and there an **unemployed** man or woman gets a job but so many remain unemployed and desperate.

What do you do with that as a Christian who believes in the providence of God?

Does this **change the truth** about God and his good purposes for those who believe?

No, it doesn't. And so the need to **entrust** ourselves to God knowing that his ways are above our ways, knowing that he is all wise and good...

Not all the babies were saved but **God kept every promise**. God did raise up a deliverer. God did establish them back in Canaan. God did raise another like Moses to be the Saviour of the world.

His sheep will never perish. Believers will live even though they die.

Like the Psalmist you and I need to know that at the end of the day it is not health or longevity or wealth or trouble free living that constitutes goodness but rather knowing and being known by God.

Psalms 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Conclusion

Can God **be trusted** in spite of your circumstances? Can God be trusted even when it seems as if physical life ends?

If Jesus Christ is your Saviour you can be at peace and know without question that all things **work together** for good.

Let us learn from Moses' parents – not to be afraid of what man could do to them... knowing God's promises always stand.

John Newton put it so well in the hymn – Amazing grace...

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, In a believer's ear! It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, And drives away his fear.

The reformer, Martin Luther put it this way in his famous hymn – A mighty fortress is our God...

*And tho' this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim — We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, For lo! his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*