

Series: Unlikely Heroes

BECAUSE THEY FEARED GOD

EXODUS 1:8-22

Text: Exodus 1:17

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¹⁷ *But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.*

Introduction:

At the close of Genesis, we find Joseph has overcome earlier trials and setbacks in his life and due to his faith in God; he has become second in command over all of Egypt.

The book of Exodus opens by reminding us of Joseph and his family (the twelve tribes of Israel) residing and multiplying in Egypt: "the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1:7).

Exodus 1:7

⁷ *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.*

The Hebrew population living in Egypt was exploding and the new king realized that there is power in numbers, and these numbers worried the new king.

In addition, Egypt had enemies who bordered them. It's one thing to defend your country from an outside attack, it's quite another to be attacked from the inside as well. The new king was obviously militarily minded and recognized a potential alliance with the Hebrews and their bordering enemies. Thus, in verse 11 we learn of his first attempt at preventing such an alliance:

Exodus 1:11

¹¹ Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

The primary objective of the task masters was to work the Israelite people and they drove them to build these storage cities (Pithom and Raamses).

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out..." (vs. 12).

Exodus 1:12

¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

That brings us to our story.

Note:

1. THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT (VS. 8-16)

Not every leader placed in a position of authority is a godly leader. Such was the case here.

Note:

A. Pharaoh's Dread (vs. 8-12)

Exodus 1:8-12

⁸ Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. ⁹ And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: ¹⁰ Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. ¹¹ Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

The Pharaoh did not honor or respect the contributions of Joseph and his people.

He addresses his people and lays out a plan to keep the Hebrews in check.

B. Pharaoh's Deception (vs. 13-15)

Exodus 1:13-15

¹³ And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: ¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. ¹⁵ And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:

He charted a course of deception.

He played upon the peoples fear.

The Egyptians response was to afflict and pressure the people. In doing so they could eliminate their perceived enemies.

C. Pharaoh's Decree (vs. 16)

Exodus 1:16

¹⁶ And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

Pharaoh conducted a plan of death and destruction.

First, he would enslave and work them mercilessly.

Second, he would deprive them of children by killing their male sons at birth.

When this did not happen, he would have their newborn sons thrown into the Nile River to appease their god.

Pharaoh desired to afflict as much pain and anguish as possible upon the people. He wanted to rob them of their children, their heritage and their future.

Pharaoh is a depiction of Satan who wants our destruction and failure.

He inflicts pain because he enjoys it.

He wants us to deny our faith.

Sometimes we question why God would allow this to happen.

I believe God allows suffering in our lives to teach us several things.

- First, He loves us and does not want us to be complacent and comfortable in this world. This world is not our home. These bodies are only temporary dwelling places.
- Second, He teaches us to be dependent upon Him. We live by faith and not by sight.
- Third, He wants us to know that NOTHING can come upon our lives unless it has passed through His hands first.

Just as Pharaoh sought the destruction of God's people, Satan wants to kill and destroy lives today.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF TWO GODLY MIDWIVES (VS. 17-19)

Note some things about these two midwives:

A. They Revered God's Law (vs. 17)

Exodus 1:17

¹⁷ But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

They respected God and did not want to disappoint Him. They had a lofty view of sin and a lofty view of God. Because we were created in the image of God, they had an exalted view and respect for life!

God's Word always precedes man's edicts. It is never wrong to do right...even if it costs us our life. We should never fear if God places His hand upon us but rather fear if He takes His hand off of our lives!

B. They Rejected Man's Law (vs. 17)

Exodus 1:17

¹⁷ But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

Shiphrah and Puah knew there was a higher law than man's law. They feared the consequences of disobeying God more than they feared Pharaoh.

To some, this passage is difficult because it appears they lied to Pharaoh. What they didn't do is tell everything they knew. Our purpose in life is to save lives.

They rejected Pharaoh's scheming designs.

C. They Resisted a Bad Law (vs. 18-19)

Exodus 1:18-19

¹⁸ And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? ¹⁹ And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

One does not have to lie when faced with a moral dilemma. What one believes will always be revealed in what they believe about God.

Some view God as non-existent, uninvolved and detached or supremely active in our lives. It is not hard to see what some believe.

3. THE PRAISE OF A GOOD DECISION (VS. 20-22)

God honors those who exalt Him. Our focus is to be on honoring Him in obedience. Note the praise from God.

A. The Blessing of God (vs. 20)

Exodus 1:20

²⁰ *Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.*

It is noted that God dealt well with the mid-wives. We are not told how He blessed them, only that He did bless them. The ultimate blessings we receive will be when we stand in His presence praising and rejoicing in His glory!

B. The Bounty from God (vs. 21)

Exodus 1:21

²¹ *And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.*

It appears that mid-wives did not normally have a family. Perhaps it was because they did not have children they were able to perform their responsibilities.

Regardless, God provided them a family. Just when you don't think things can get any worse, we find the BONDAGE of man in verse 22.

Exodus 1:22

²² And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

I have learned never to ask, “Can things get any worse?” Sometimes things do get worse before they get better!

Pharaoh went from literally working them to death, to slaying the first-born sons treacherously.

Having failed in that, He openly conveyed his intentions to all.

Close:

We too must fear God above man.