

The Remarkable Faith of Moses' Mother:

A Story of Courage and Sacrifice

When it comes to mamas in the Bible, I do not know who would be your favorite. There are some great ones. Hannah was remarkable. What about Mary, the mother of Jesus? I'm not saying anything against Jesus's mama. You know, she was phenomenal.

The Role of Mothers in Shaping History

One of my favorites has to be the one in our text today: Jochebed, Moses's mother. I could preach the same message every year because she was such an exceptional woman. No other force in a child's life is as strong an influence as a mother. Paul said, in writing to Timothy,

"When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice." (2 Timothy 1:5)

Both of these ladies had been major players in the development of Timothy's faith throughout his life.

Mothers have been a stabilizing factor in the shaping of history. Napoleon said, "The future destiny of the child is always the work of the mother."

The Turbulent Times of Moses's Birth

During the years Joseph served as vice president in Egypt in the book of Genesis, his family was highly respected. Even after his death, his memory was honored by how the Egyptians treated the Hebrews. But the political climate had changed at the beginning of the book of Exodus.

Exodus 1:8 tells us:

"Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."

This new king wasn't happy with the rapid increase of the Jewish people, so he took dramatic and drastic measures to control it. In Exodus 1:22, it says:

"So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive."

So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born, you shall cast into the river." His method to reduce the number of Israelites was extreme. They were slaughtering babies--casting baby boys into the river. And that is where our story opens.

Turbulent times. Nightmares for parents. A man of the House of Levi went and took a wife. Her name was Jochebed, a daughter of Levi. Even to get married in this politically charged climate would have been an act of remarkable faith. So the woman conceived, and she bore a son. And when and when he was placed on her chest, one look was all it took.

Some people might have looked at this little bundle of joy and seen only big problems. But not this little Jewish mama. All she saw was tremendous potential and the most beautiful baby that had ever been born. But there was something exceptional about her boy. She recognized it, and she wasn't alone. The Bible says in Acts chapter seven, verse 20,

"At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months."

At this time, Moses was born and was well-pleasing to God. There was nothing ordinary about her boy. What would she do? The law is on the books. Boys are to be drowned in the river. The only thing she could do was she could hide him, and she did that for three months.

Hiding Moses was the first act of civil disobedience found in the scriptures. And it's not some long-haired radical protesting the injustice, but a mama. Was it justified, in the eyes of the Lord, this disobedience? You bet it was. Jochebed was more clever and resourceful than the tyrant king and his accomplices.

J. S. Exell said, "Tyranny is too calculating to be clever, but a mother's love is quick and spontaneous in thought." She saw a refuge where tyrants would never think to look. The hiding place chosen was likely carefully selected, vigilantly guarded, and sufficient--at least for a season. She hid him so well. She kept him safe. She shielded him as best she could. But the Bible says there came a time when she could no longer hide him.

What heart-wrenching words we find there. What a rude awakening for a mama. You see, there came a point when she realized that her very best efforts weren't good enough. She couldn't shield and protect him forever. Being overly protective at this stage of the game would have only jeopardized both of their lives. She would have to

make the ultimate sacrifice by letting go. Is there anything harder for a mother to do than to let go? Impossible.

My mother insisted that she carried me as a baby for 11 months. She didn't want to let go. It's so easy for a mother to be overprotective and to want to shelter their kids, be their cheerleaders, and act as their campaign managers. They'll do anything to protect their babies.

I still remember when my wife was carrying Benny as a baby, and she tripped over something on the floor. She fell, and the last thing on her mind was taking care of herself, and she fell and hurt her arm. But she held him and guarded him. That's what mamas do.

Think about the mama who was concerned about her only son going off to college. So she wrote a letter to the college. It said, "My son has been accepted for admission to your college. Soon he will be leaving me. Please give your personalized attention to the selection of his roommate. I want to be sure that his roommate does not use foul language, tell off-color jokes, smoke, drink, or chase after girls. I hope you understand why I'm appealing to you directly. You see, this is the first time my son will be away from home besides the three years he spent in the Marine Corps.

Jochebed's Act of Civil Disobedience

It's hard to let go, but they will never learn to ride a bike if you don't. Keep them in the nest, and they will never learn to fly. Jochebed got it. It was a hard lesson to learn, but she got it.

She took an ark of bulrushes for him, dabbed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's banks. How did she know her boat would float? She knew because she had already watered it with her tears.

This basket was the original Love Boat. She had poured her heart into it, and hope floats when you put your hope in God. She laid the ark in the reeds along the Nile. But long before that, this mama laid it on the heart of God.

How many prayers has she prayed? How many sons and daughters have been saved from being swept away downriver because of the prayers of their mothers? Can't you just picture with me, see her working overtime on this ark, her skillful hands moving with precision as she dabs it with asphalt and pitch as she tests it with her tears to ensure it's waterproof? There is no way she could have laid it, released it so courageously, upon the Nile if she hadn't first placed it into the hands of a loving God.

She had already given her little bundle, her beautiful baby boy, to the Lord. But you know something? Just because the boat would float doesn't mean her heart wasn't breaking.

Is there anything like the broken heart of a mama? Can you see her as she places the ark in the Nile? She took one final glance, and then she raced home alone. What was that journey like? Was it easy to let go? No. She loved her boy and God so much that she had to let go. But let me tell you something. He'd not been left unattended.

Verse four of chapter two says:

"And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him."

Miriam only had one job to do at this very moment. Her instructions were to watch the baby. How long did she stand there? The Bible doesn't say, but she stood there long enough. She focused her eyes on the basket like a heat-seeking missile. An average passerby might think she was wasting time just standing around. But in doing nothing, the girl was actually doing everything.

What confidence Jochebed had placed in her daughter. She posted her like a guard, and her daughter, this teenager, responded with sheer delight, knowing that her mother trusted her with such a tremendous responsibility.

A mother's prayers and a sister's vigilance will one day result in a Pharaoh's fear, torment, and overthrow. You have to look closely. Buried there amongst the reeds, rocking gently on the Nile, was a power that would defeat the pharaoh, for this baby boy was pleasing to God.

Mama, God has his eye on your baby today. Long before he grows up to be what God has ordained for him to be, God watches over your baby. His eye is on the sparrow, and I'm confident He's watching over your children. Moses's sister was indeed watching, but God in heaven had ordained this moment in Jewish history, and He was also eyeballing him. The eye of the Lord knew exactly where Moses was in all those reeds.

If you want to know the future of a nation, all you have to do is watch the baby. In biblical history, what kind of a nation would destroy their babies, just throw them away?

There are federal laws against tampering with an eagle's nest. If you mess with her nest, you'll land in jail. No, no doubt about it. Why? Because our government recognizes that inside those eggs are--What? Baby eagles! It's so obvious. Scientists don't argue the issue. Politicians don't debate it. They rely on good old common sense. Do you remember the days of common sense? I don't know what cemetery the common sense of America has been buried in, but it's full.

Psalm 139:13 says:

For You formed my inward parts;

You covered me in my mother's womb

Even before your children were born, God was watching.

Children are a gift from the Lord. The Bible teaches that human life begins at conception. The Bible teaches that. If you're pregnant, it's a baby. You don't need a college degree or a medical certificate to know that. It's just how it is.

If you want to know the future of a nation, watch the baby. And if you're going to see the future of a church, keep your eyes on the nursery.

So sometimes, if you get annoyed by a little person scampering by you, remember, that's your future. If you get annoyed by a baby crying during the service, that's your future. That's why Jesus said, "Forbid them not to come unto me."

Letting Go - The Ultimate Sacrifice

Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe and saw the basket. In verse 6, the Bible says:

And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

She didn't feel compassion because it was her duty but because it was her nature.

As she peeled back the cover, it was like God sent an angel to pinch baby Moses and say, "Cry, baby, cry."

Oh, and he cried, and if you listen close enough, you can hear the song of Israel's redemption in that little baby's voice. God used a baby's tears to control the powerful heart of a princess. Her maternal instincts kicked in stronger than any earthly king's command and told her to rescue and care for the child.

This is profound. It shows the greatness and the bigness of our God. A baby's tears were God's first weapon in his war against Egypt. Oh, we know all about the plagues. But God fired the first shot when Moses began to shed a tear, and he began to wail.

Moses's sister was right where she needed to be, and she said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child?"

There's a good idea for you. Way to go, Sis. Moses's sister was vigilant and gutsy. Think about the moves she made to work through the entourage with the Pharaoh's daughter and say, hey, can I help you out here? She knew when to ask the question and how to make the suggestion respectfully. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go.

Verse 8 says:

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother.

Miriam may have said something like, "Hey, Mom. Come here. You'll never believe it. I've got a job for you." To which Jochebed could have replied, "Oh, yes, I will. Because I've prayed a billion prayers,"

Can you imagine the scene as she returns with her mama in tow? Just think about her self-control in a time of overwhelming excitement. Inside, her heart was leaping, but she was not letting on that this was her mama, and the Pharaoh's daughter was holding her brother. Hollywood has nothing on her.

The Pharaoh's daughter said to Moses' mother in verse 9:

"Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages."

That ending is perfect. "I will give you your wages." Isn't that just like the God that we serve? She would have gladly done it for free, but the Pharaoh's daughter would pay her to watch over her own child.

What mother on earth gets paid what she's worth anyway? A little boy was showing pictures of his mom and dad on their wedding day, and he asked his father, "Daddy, is that the day you got mom to come and work for us?"

Mothers work hard. It has to be, without question, the most overlooked and underappreciated job in the universe. But not today. As a nation, we stop today to say Thanks, Mom.

Jochebed's Faith and Trust in God

Verse nine says:

So the woman took the child and nursed him.

Jochebed had given the child to God, and God handed the child back. She nursed Moses and trained him. She instilled God's word in him by speaking blessings into his life and teaching him who his people were. As she rocked him to sleep, she sang little

Jewish lullabies. She helped build in him the faith that would become a characteristic of his adult life.

As we see in verse 10,

"And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son."

That may have been true on paper, but there's no bond on Earth like the bond between a mother and her son. Once again, Jochebed must let him go as she slips off into the shadows of Jewish history. But listen, he never forgot those lessons and songs he learned on his mother's knees. The Bible says, train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Do you believe that? If you've got a prodigal. Do you believe that? I do. The Bible doesn't say that there might not be some bumps in the road or that he may not drift, but the promise is he'll come back.

Hebrews 11:24-25 says:

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

Moses grew up with the best education and the finest of everything. But as he whistled through the palace, I wonder if he was humming the little songs he had learned on Jochebed's lap.

Jochebed had only had Moses for a short time. She would never hear him cry, "Let my people go," or see him part the Red Sea. But what a strong influence she had upon his life. She let him go so that one day he could walk into the palace and say, "Let my people go."

His whole life was about being let go. His mama let him go, and then one day, God told him, "Now you go tell Pharaoh, Let my people go."

Conclusion

There once was a young lady named Lizzie DeArmond who ignored the claims of Jesus Christ. She laughed at her mother's prayers and turned her back on her mother's God. She seemingly was heading in the wrong direction. There came a day, however, when she was moved to pen these words.

I grieved my Lord, from day to day
I scorned his love so full and free,
And though I wandered far away

My mother's prayers have followed me.
I'm coming home.
I'm coming home to live my wasted life anew.
For Mother's prayers have followed me,
Have followed me the whole world through.

You know, one day we will stand before God one day and get rewarded for all the works that we have done. I think about the awards that will be given to all the great preachers, evangelists, Bible commentators, and theologians from down through the ages. But I think there will be a special place for mamas who have prayed their kids into the kingdom. They may have never stood on a platform, never spoken into a microphone, and never had the spotlight hit them in the face, but quietly and alone, they prayed for their kids. You can't worry your kids into the kingdom. You can only pray them in.

The hardest thing to do is take your child at any age and say, "Heavenly Father, I'm letting go. I'm taking my hands off and giving them to you. I'm trusting you that they won't be swept away. You will provide, you will watch over, you will care. You gave the child to me in the first place, and I'm just giving them back."

Moms, thank you for your prayers. Even though many of our mamas today are with Jesus now. Even though our mamas may be in Heaven, for some of us, the influence of their prayers lives on. And we have become their legacy.