

Exodus 2

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[0 : 00] Jesus chapter 2. It's on page 45 of the church. We're going to get to the second half of chapter 2.

! Do you know the books, Wise Wally? Do you know those books? It's the name of a boy and you find him, you have to find him in the midst of the busyness of the picture.

So he's on a fairground or he's on a beach or he's on a football pitch. And he's always in the picture, isn't he, Wally? But he's very difficult to find. They've made many things the same as his red and white sweater.

Where's Wally? And there are times in your life and my life where we find ourselves asking not a dissimilar question, not where's Wally, but where is God. And I guess we are most prone to ask that when we are in the middle of difficult circumstances in our lives.

When we're going through tough times or painful suffering. I'm often asked, why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? And it's a big question of life, of suffering, both for Christians and for non-Christians.

[1 : 08] And at times as believers we feel so helpless, we feel so alone. We wonder, has God literally forgotten about me? And we say, where is God? Well, last week we found the Israelites in Egypt experiencing their own severe suffering at the hands of Pharaoh and his people.

Do you have a Pharaoh's policy? It had moved from forced residency, to forced labour, to increased brutality, to forced infanticides. All the way to decree that all male Hebrew babies are thrown into the Nile.

And you've got to figure, surely in the midst of that, because God was the very one who had told Jacob at the end of Genesis, I want you to go down with your people to Egypt.

Surely in the midst of all this, the Israelites are reaching, where is God? And as you read the first two chapters on Exodus, that sense of the absence of God is actually reflected in the text.

So as you read through Exodus 1 and 2, do you notice who's nearly absent? You find actually, up to chapter 2 and verse 22, in 44 verses, God is mentioned just three times.

[2 : 19] And I think that's intentional. Only three times in 44 verses, to give us the sense that things are getting worse. That it feels as if God is not there. But as we look at the second half of chapter 2, we're going to see that while God's apparent absence, it can be the perception, it looks like he's absent in our lives, the narrator is going to subvert that idea.

And he's going to say, if bad things are happening in your life, then God is not uninvolved. God is not remote or uncaring. What we see in Exodus 1 and 2 is that the seemingly invisible God is the active, caring God.

The seemingly invisible God is the constantly active, caring God. Three things. First of all, the slowness of God. The slowness of God.

When we left off the story last week, Moses had just been miraculously spared execution of me. Pharaoh putting all those Hebrew boys into the Nile. But Moses, he's been adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, who has also hired a Hebrew woman to nurse Moses, who happens to be his mother. And our passage begins today, 40 years later since Moses' birth. And pretty much, the whole period of those 40 years, Moses has been in the palace. Being trained and educated in all things Egyptian.

[3 : 46] But as we pick up the story here, it is pretty clear, can you see in verse 11, that his sense of identity is still very much that of a Hebrew. So look at verses 11 and 12.

One day when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people. And he looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. One of his people. He looked this way and that, and seen no one, he struck down the Egyptian, and hit him in the sand.

Now, I don't think it's hard for any of us to see that that wasn't a good thing to do, was it? Moses should not have killed the Egyptian. We'll come back to that in a moment. But what I want you to notice, is although the New Age of 1, see Moses' actions are clearly wrong, his impulse to save one of his people was not wrong at all.

Moses looked on their burdens. That's a better translation. It is more than watching from the sidelines. Moses is not disinterested. Moses is watching with distress and emotion, just as God was watching with distress and emotion.

Moses was deeply moved, just as God was moved by their suffering. And in addition to that, when I told Moses struck the Egyptian, that verb, the struck verb, is exactly the same as we're going to see later on in Exodus.

[5 : 05] When God said in the place, I will strike the Egyptians with wonders, he's going to strike them with me, with water turned into blood. He'll strike them with lice and with frogs. He's going to strike them with the death of the firstborn.

In other words, God is going to exact justice against the Egyptians. And he will do it in the right way in the right time. So it was not wrong of Moses to have this impulse to save the Israelites.

What was wrong here was the action that he took. Now, having killed the Egyptian, we're told Moses, yeah, if the legion buried in sand, I don't know whether he had a child sticking out or something, but the problem becomes known.

And it's very public news in verse 13. When he went out the next game, he had two Hebrews struggling together, and he said to the man in the wrong, why did you strike a rebellion? He answered, who made you a prince in the church over us?

Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? Then Moses was afraid, and thought, surely this thing has become known. So this isn't exactly as Moses had planned, is it?

[6 : 09] I hope you've picked up that so far. What was Moses' plan? Well, actually, it's quite difficult to tell from Exodus chapter 2 what Moses' plan was. But interestingly, when you go to Acts chapter 7, and you see the first Christian martyr, Stephen, and he's preaching, he gives a sermon just before he's killed, and he rehearses pretty much all of Israelite history.

Listen to what he says about Moses. Acts chapter 7, and verse 23. He says this. When he was 40 years old, that's Moses, he came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel, and seeing one of them being wrong, he defended the oppressed man, and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian.

And then here's the key verse. He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. You see, Moses figured after all these years of slavery, after all these years of suffering, after all these years of crying out to God, all Moses had to do was show up.

He just needed to clearly demonstrate whose side he was on. I'm not on the Egyptian side anymore. I'm on the Israelite side. And they would just fall on his feet and they would say, oh Moses, lead us, lead us Moses.

Instead, he gets, well, who may do what? Who may do what? And essentially, he's rejected by his people. And as if things couldn't get worse, but in verse 15 of chapter 2, Moses heard of it, he sought to kill Moses.

[7 : 39] Moses fled from Pharaoh and he stayed in the land of Midian and he sat down by a well. So his people have rejected him. Pharaoh's issued a death warrant on his life and as a result, Moses runs and he heads to the land of Midian and he sits down by a well.

And all of this brings us to the slowness of God's ways. That sermon that Stephen preaches, after he talks of the bit we just read, says Moses ended up living in Midian for 40 years. 40 years.

Think back to what you were doing 40 years ago. I'm delighted to be able to tell you I wasn't even born. It's a lifetime, isn't it? For many of us here, it's more than a lifetime.

40 years. He's been trained in all things Egyptian. 40 years in Midian. And we know he's going to lead the Israelites out of Egypt right to the edge of the promised land, but there's a middle 40 years, isn't he, where he lives in Midian.

And the question is not so much where is God, but what on earth is God doing? Listen to this line, God is pleased to work his purposes out often, if not always, in a sort of slow motion kind of way.

[8 : 55] And if you read through the Bible, actually that's what you see always. Nearly always. It's not just with Moses, isn't it? God works in slow motion, no one waits, 120 years for the flood.

Abraham has got it year after year after year for God to give him the promised son. In the New Testament, Paul is converted on the road to Damascus, but the bit we all really often forget is when he talks in Galatians about God taking him off for three years in Arabia before he brings him back for any kind of public ministry.

You go into churches and you find there's the same phenomenon, don't you? It takes 300 years for the gospel to really take hold in the Roman Empire and then it falls into decline for a thousand years.

And you've got to figure out, don't you, how God has worked over the centuries. You figure the slowness of his ways must be part of his eternal sovereign plan as a result of his perfect wisdom. And Moses found that to be true in his life and I suggest to you that you will find it so in yours. And it goes completely against our expectations and our desires for that.

[10:08] There is not one of us here who is not fumed with frustration that God is just chugging along in first gear in our lives when we want him to be in overdrive. When things we feel need to happen we say to God, are you serious?

God, I know you've got a lot on your plate but we really need to speed things up a bit in this situation. And you know what the problem is? The problem is not that God is too stern, it's that you and I are too fast.

You see the phenomenon of very, very small slight women taking a very large dog for a walk. Have you seen that?

And an untrained dog and it's kind of straining on its tether. It's bulging. Its tongue is hanging out and it jerks this way and that way and the dog pants and wheezes and strains and the poor lady is yanked here and there.

We say, what's the problem with the picture? Does the fault lie with the owner? Does the fault lie with the lady who's getting her arm dislocated? Is she the one who's being cruel and unreasonable?

[11:20] Why doesn't she just run this way and that way? Why doesn't she run the dog's beck and call? Or does the dog need to learn words like heel and sit and down?

And you see that it's like us. Our natural instinct is to get way out ahead of God. Pulling and straining and doing enormous damage to ourselves. And it's like Moses.

Moses at this stage in his training is perhaps too strong. He's too educated. He's too gifted. He's too advantage for his own good. And he's straining at the leash.

He's wanting to push ahead with his plan. With his own timing. And he would have to learn that waiting is not a sign of weakness. But actually it's a sign of strength. Is waiting easy?

Children, we're here. Is waiting easy? It's not easy. It's not easy at all. And that's why it's not an accident that the Bible tells us over and over again that we need to wait.

[12:19] We need to wait. Wait on the Lord. Those famous verses from Psalm 130. I wait for the Lord. My soul waits and in his word I put my hope.

My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning. More than watchmen for the morning. There are lots of people here this morning who are waiting for things. You're waiting for a better job.

Some of you are waiting for a change in your finances. Some of you are waiting for better health. Some of you are waiting for a spouse. Some of you are waiting for a child. And waiting doesn't mean inactivity.

It doesn't mean not seeking a spouse or not seeking a better job and so on. And it doesn't mean stifling your creativity, not being an entrepreneur if that's where you want to be. It doesn't mean not forcing an issue.

It doesn't mean not cutting corners by being disobedient to what God's word clearly says you should do in your own life. Trusting that God knows what he's doing when nothing from your perspective seems to be happening.

[13:19] Because the sovereign Lord is always at work and when you and I feel like we are stuck in the waiting room interminably it's actually in the waiting room.

It's actually in the daily routine of life that real games are made. And the reality of God's love and how he provides become most obvious for Moses at this point.

God is never too slow in his ways but we become too fast. So why would God give Moses 40 years in Midian?

Couldn't he have just taken him there for a little while and then brought him back? It would have all worked out. Well no, it would appear that God has got some lessons that he wants Moses to learn and it's going to take him 40 years to learn them.

So secondly the lessons of God. Let me mention two of them. First of all is humility. Humility would not be on anyone's top ten list in Moses' life when he slept out of the limelight.

[14:23] After 40 years in Pharaoh's palace. It's interesting that later in his life after Moses has gone back and he's led the Israelites out of Egypt towards the promised land it's written about Moses in Numbers 12:23.

Now the man Moses was very humble more than all the people who were on the face of the earth. And you've got to figure out what ever God did to Moses in Midian it worked. Let's get back to the story.

Moses he arrived at this well in Midian. Moses' journey would involve going across this barren hot sand! picture Moses lurching his way through the wasteland occasionally tripping on rocks his tailored clothing catching on thorns he is not strutting down the roads alternate between singing I did it my way and it's a wonderful life he is running for his life he is wondering what have the last 40 years been about why did God let him bother learning the way of Egyptian life why did God have him bother leading military accomplishments because now all Moses is is a fugitive in a foreign land sitting by a well and that surely has got a potential as he crushed Moses but that isn't God's intention God's intention was not to crush Moses it was to humble him and there's a difference isn't there C.S. Lewis in his little book on mere Christianity describes humility like this he says humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less isn't that great humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less that is a very important distinction as we saw earlier Moses has got some good motivations that he acted upon on behalf of the Israelites he's incensed by the oppression but as Stephen brought out in act 7 there's a fair bit of Moses thinking about Moses in the act that he did and Moses is looking to prove himself to be the saviour of the Israelites to be this great champion who steps out into the arena and defeat the enemy and to be the one that everyone cheers and he leads the people and Moses would become that leader but he would first need to become a person who thought about himself less and thought about others more what's the first lesson you see that there in verses 16 and 17 now the priest of Midian had seven daughters and they came out and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock the shepherds came and drove them away but Moses stood up and saved them and watered their flock so Moses instinct you remember to be a deliverer but it comes to the fore again but this time there's nothing in it for Moses is there he's back and he's in the back end of nowhere and yet he acts on behalf of these women it is purely for their sake it's not going to be about his own reputation but that is exactly where God wants him to be to be this great deliverer he first has to learn to be a deliverer on an immensely smaller scale and here is his first opportunity he was serving women who need a protector they need a champion against these rebel shepherds and we've got to see that Moses gets it right here he does the right thing at the right time humbly and in the process he is trained by

[18:11] God to be a deliverer in the future listen to how Matthew Henry describes what Moses is doing here he says Moses loved to be doing justice and appearing in defence of those who saw injured which every man ought to do as it is in the power of his hands to do it he loves to be doing good wherever the providence of God casts us we should endeavour and desire to be useful and when we cannot do the good we would we must be ready to do the good we can and he that is faithful in little shall be entrusted with more that is a really helpful insight if you can't do the good you would do the good you can if you can't do the good you would do the good you can think about that in your own life God's ways might be really slow to you right now there are many many Christians that live in the future loads of them in this country they've got all these plans and they long for change and they've got aspirations of how things will be it'll be different when dot dot dot and you want to do things you want to follow your dreams and once you've achieved that goal your life will no longer be monotonous and you'll be fulfilled then I'll really be able to help people and serve other people

I just need to get to this place first and that might happen or it might not and aiming for those goals is a good thing but in the meantime God has got 101 things you can do with your life right now because God has put you where you are right now and you are ideally suited you are ideally positioned to love particular individuals in your life right now and serve people right now and pray

for those people right now and to encourage them right now and to be involved in projects right now and if those opportunities materialize if your life changes well you praise God for that don't you and you use them but until then if you can't do the good you would do the good you can the second lesson for Moses to learn in Midian is what it is to be in exile can you see that in verses 21 to 22 Moses was content to dwell with the man and he gave Moses his daughter

Zipporah she gave birth to a son and he called his name Gershom for he said I have been a sojourner in a foreign land I've been in exile in a foreign land all the way through the Old Testament and the New Testament is this idea of living in the world as an exile it's first thought about here really next week my old boss is coming to preach for the day and he used well in my memory he used to give this illustration every week so he might do it next week he does laugh he went to San Marine Philadelphia which he never ceased to tell me and when he got to Philadelphia his favourite illustration was that he needed a green card and when his green card arrived it said on the green card resident alien I think it says something different now I think if you move to America it says permanent resident now but the true resident alien is good though isn't it and he would often tell us in sermons he had a clearly defined relationship to the place that he lived in he was a resident in Philadelphia he wasn't a tourist he wasn't a refugee no he was a resident he was attached to the place where he was living and yet he was an alien he wasn't

American his natural home was elsewhere many of you know what that's like and however much he assimilated into Philadelphia culture there was something different about him now I don't suggest that all that background is there when Moses calls himself a sojourner but it certainly comes into play when the bible picks up this theme of being an exile or a resident alien and it develops it throughout the bible the Israelites here they are in exile albeit they've got no rights of their own and God will bring the Israelites to their own land the promised land and they will get to live there but as they live there we know from the bible they will turn their back on God and they will turn from God to other gods to idols and God tells them I've warned you about this and if you do this I will send you into exile and he does send them into Babylon and they live as resident aliens in Babylon and eventually they come back to Jerusalem but when you turn to the pages in the New Testament you find something astounding you find that anyone who is in

Christ anyone who is a Christian is described as in exile or resident alien if you want to follow that so Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 2 to all the churches in Asia to all the Christians and he says dear friends I urge you as foreigners and exiles to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against yourself you are a foreigner and an exile and live such good lives amongst the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us if you are a follower of Jesus Christ you are in exile Paul says this world is not your natural home and we look forward to being brought to the promised land don't we to our true home and of all the new heavens and the new earth and as Moses was a resident in Midian so we are resident aliens here so that means we do things differently don't we we handle money differently we handle sex differently we handle power differently we live in a distinct community life but as resident aliens we are to live lives in loving service from the surrounding world as Moses would do in Midian as the Old [24 : 15] Testament exiles were commanded to do in Babylon we are to do good to seek the prosperity leader and our wider community and our city and pray for it it is more than being in the world but not of it we are more than that we are exiles resident aliens we don't belong and yet we seek the good of the city we are different from the world and yet we are for the world we are distinct from the world so we are not sectarian we don't live in our own kind of little closed brethren bubble in a Christian ghetto we are not chameleons that just fit in no we are distinct from the world and yet we are for the world we play our role and that is what it means in the Bible to be an exile to be a resident alien that was a lesson Moses would start to learn the lessons of God thirdly the heart of God the heart of God we read Exodus 2 22 and the last time God was mentioned was in

Exodus 1 verse 21 and God doesn't seem to be anywhere and we are reminded here though that though the seemingly invisible God well you can't see him but he is constantly constantly the active caring God look at verse 23 chapter 2 in those many days the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and they cried out for help and their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God and God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham Isaac and with Jacob and God saw the people of Israel and God knew four great verbs for you this week God hears God remembers God sees God knows God hears when you cry out to God he hears he hears your prayers he is not oblivious to you he is not off somewhere for us so he

doesn't have to hear what you are saying but if he is slow to answer he is not it is not that he is ignoring you it is not that he is powerless to act he will answer you but he will answer you according to his perfect timing which is the best for you

God hears and God sees God is not blind to suffering he is not blind to the struggles that you go through he is not blind to what people are saying about you he sees it all and as Moses watched with distress the suffering of his people God watches with distress at your suffering he hears he sees and he knows he knows not just what is happening to you but he knows what is being done to you on the inside he knows what it's doing to you on the inside he knows what it feels like he knows how torn up you are and the reason why he knows is because he became one of us he took on the human flesh in the person of his son and experienced every suffering and every temptation that was known to us he knows the turmoil inside and all of that you feel like screaming that God knows and so this question comes up and says

God if you see and you hear and you know then why don't you do something about and the answer is he will isn't it he will because that is what it means that God remembers what does God remember God remembers in this case God remember the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and that is God had made promises to them to the people that they would have many people and allowed for them to call home and he would be their God and the God of their children we mustn't think that when it speaks of God remembers him like he had forgotten and he had slipped his mind as if God has been around him for a while and his mind is starting to go not at all rather it is shorthand for God acting in accordance with the promises he had made when the Bible says God remembered it is telling you he is about to be he is about to act in a significant way in the light of what he promised beforehand and that is what it means for us so when

God remembers us God remembers his covenant with us through the Lord Jesus we're going to eat and drink of a sign of this covenant in a few moments he remembers his covenant which means he always always keeps his promises so he will slowly and he calls on us to wait because he is 100% faithful to all the promises made to us promises like I will never leave you nor forsake you promises like you began a good work and you will bring it to completion promises like one day all will be well promises like he will withhold from you no good thing he remembers and when you see for the Israelite God heard he remembered he saw he knew as we will see next week because of those things Moses will be brought back from Midian to Egypt to be their rescuer and for us

[29 : 43] God heard and he remembered and he saw and he knew and therefore he sent into the world another rescuer who like Moses is moved by the suffering of his people so Matthew 9 verse 36 when he saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless the rescuer the rescuer who would be rejected by his people who made you rule over us he came to his own but his own received him not the rescuer who like Moses would be a shepherd the good shepherd the one who would not only have to risk his life Jesus would give his life for the sheep he would give it all so as Jesus comes as the greater Moses and the greater shepherd who would lay down his life for sheep because that is the only way that you and I can be rescued and because by nature we are not humble we are proud and we are rebellious and there is a penalty for that and Jesus comes as the greater shepherd the greater

Moses and dies in our place and he takes the penalty for us and so as a result of God's seeing and hearing and knowing and remembering he gave up his only son his only son he gave up for you and me and he says think about that think about that as he comes to the table but if I would give my only son whom I love whom I have loved for all eternity if I would allow him to go to death for you you can be assured that I will give you everything that is necessary in your life at the right time the God of Moses is the God of us he hears and sees and remembers and knows because the seemingly invisible God is the constantly active caring God let's sing let's rejoice and let's praise God as we come to the table and sing the of

Thank you.