

Three Women and a Baby

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[0 : 00] turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 11, if you would please, and also to the book of Exodus. So you can put a little, your finger or a sticker or a little bookmark or whatever you use. I use three by five cards. That's why I have all of these little three by five cards in my Bible.

Put a little note in Exodus chapter one, because we're going to go there very quickly as well. Returning, as I mentioned last week, to the second half of the chapter 11 of Hebrews, and we will be here for the next nine weeks or so. Josie, please serve us this morning reading chapter 11, verse number 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. I suspect that you don't have to think very hard to remember a season of your life that was particularly difficult or painful or disorienting.

You are not alone in this. I am not better than you. I also don't have to think very hard to remember a season of life that is particularly difficult, painful, disorienting. In fact, isn't it true that sometimes it's harder to forget those particular seasons of life as much as we might wish to forget them? If life is a highway, then it is certainly not the kind of highways that we are used to, that take us fairly directly from one place to another place, without too terribly much interruption along the way. No, if life is a highway, it's much more like the highway of candy land.

There are also unforgettable lows in the walk of faith.

[2 : 43] Sometimes those lows can really drag you down. When I was in high school, I became certified as a lifeguard so that I could serve at Bible camp because we were always short lifeguards, it seemed, and it made me uncomfortable that we didn't have always a certified lifeguard. And since I was planning to be there and to serve for the summer for all of the kids' camp, I took lifeguard training and became certified as a lifeguard in CPR and so on.

One of the things that they made us do in order to pass our certification was to go to the deep end of the pool and to hold a weight over our heads while we kicked with just our legs and had to tread water in the middle of this pool.

Now, I don't remember how much of this weight was. I was trying to think about this. Legend has it that this was like a 45-pound weight, but I'm pretty convinced that's not true.

I suspect that this may have been 20 pounds or 25 pounds, a single dumbbell of some sort, or a single, what would you call that? Plate, a single plate of some sort, but not the big one, not the 45-pound.

I was thinking about that. As you're holding this weight over your head and you're not allowed to move, right? Because it's not supposed to be swimming. You're supposed to stay in one spot.

[4 : 09] And I was thinking, what if they put another one on, like loading up plates on the side when you're doing the bench press? And they just kept putting plates. Eventually, it wouldn't matter how much you were kicking, how strong your legs were.

Or you would just sink. Life can feel like that sometimes, can it? Like, I don't know if I can take one more thing. I'm just barely holding my head up with what I've got.

When life is hard and the weight is too much, perhaps we say, I don't know if I will survive one more hardship like the last one.

It's all just too much. I'm not sure whether God is still in control. It feels like life is out of control.

Maybe God has abandoned me to the icy clutches of fate.

I promise you, child of God, God, your Father, is very much still in control. He has not and He will not abandon you.

[5 : 26] But when we look for evidence of His grace in our circumstances, and our circumstances are a series of unfortunate events, one after the other after the other, or worse, a whole bunch of

bad events all at once, a crippling fear may override our ability to walk by faith.

Fear that stirs up a spiritually toxic soup of doubt and discouragement and disillusionment and despair.

But I have good news for you. Because the gospel of Jesus offers us a better way. Fear, fear looks at our circumstances and causes us to fret.

While faith focuses on God's promises. When the book of Exodus opens, you would be hard-pressed, I suspect, to find a more hope-filled community.

They are God's people. The descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Not only are they God's people, but they have God's promises.

[7 : 05] Promises that God made to Abraham. Back in Genesis chapter 17 and verse 6. Let me read them to you because they're so good. God says this to Abraham. I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you.

I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you and your future offspring throughout their generations. This is a permanent covenant to be your God.

And the God of your offspring after you. And to you and your future offspring, I will give the land where you are residing, all of the land of Canaan, as a permanent possession.

And I will be their God. They are God's people. And they have God's promises. But not only that, they know God's plan.

I was reminded this week, at the end of Jacob's life, Genesis chapter 46 and verse 3, they know God's plan.

[8 : 16] Here's God's plan. God said, I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.

I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you back. They are God's people with God's promises, and they know God's plan.

God told us to come to Egypt, promised to be with us, and he promised that he will take us back to Canaan. You would be hard-pressed to find a more hope-filled people.

And for perhaps 200 years, in Egypt, all is well. Exodus chapter 1 and verse 1, these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob.

Each came with his family, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin. Dan, and Naphtali, and Gad, and Asher.

[9 : 26] The total number of Jacob's descendants was 70. Joseph, I love this little addendum, Joseph was already in Egypt. It's sort of a wink-wink, in case if you didn't read the book of Genesis.

Joseph was already in Egypt. Verse 6, Joseph and all his brothers, and all that generation, eventually died.

But, the Israelites were fruitful, and increased rapidly, multiplied, and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land, the land of Egypt, was filled with them.

All is well. Fruitful. Multiplying. God is blessing. God is with them. It's clear.

We are God's people. We have God's promises. We know God's plan. All is well. Until it's not.

[10 : 34] Verse number 8. A new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt.

And he said to his people, look, the Israelite people, are more numerous, and powerful, than we are. Come.

Let's deal, shrewdly with them. Otherwise, they will multiply, further, and when war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us, and notice this, leave the country.

Leave the country. So the Egyptians, assigned taskmasters, over the Israelites, to oppress them, with forced labor.

They became slaves. They built, Pithom, and Ramses, as supply cities, for Pharaoh. But, notice this, the more, they oppressed them, the more, they multiplied, and spread, so that, the Egyptians, came, to dread, the Israelites.

[11 : 53] Verse 13. Notice these words. They worked, the Israelites, ruthlessly. They made, their lives, bitter, with difficult labor, in brick, and mortar, and all kinds, of field work.

They ruthlessly, imposed, all this work, on them. It was so good. Life is the highway.

And then it wasn't. Now it's very bad. They have multiplied, spread over the whole land of Egypt, and now, they are slaves, in Egypt, ruthlessly, oppressed, by the Egyptians.

The weight, is on top of them. But it gets worse. Verse 15. The king of Egypt, said to the Hebrew midwives, the first, whose name was, Shiphrah, and the second, whose name was, Pua, when you

help the Hebrew women, give birth, observe them, as they deliver.

If the child is a son, kill him. But if it is a daughter, she may live. This seems to be, some kind of a, fairly private conversation, more of a secret conversation, that he has with them.

[13:22] Some private orders, so that when the women, are giving birth, to their babies, they're supposed to, sort of secretly check, to see if it's a son, or a daughter, and if it's a son, kill it, and then say, sorry, that baby died, in childbirth.

And then it gets worse. But first, it gets better. The midwives, however, feared God, and did not do, verse 17, as the king of Egypt, had told them.

They let the boys live. Praise the Lord, for those kind of midwives. So the king of Egypt, summoned the midwives, and asked them, why have you done this? And let the boys live. And the midwives said to Pharaoh, the Hebrew women, I suspect this is not on the screen anymore, the Hebrew women, are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous, and give birth, before the midwife can get to them.

So God was good to the midwives. But notice this, the people multiplied. Again, we have this idea, of multiplying, and became very numerous. As much as Pharaoh tried to stop it, the more they multiplied.

He is intending for subtraction to be happening. We all know how subtraction works, right? You take one away. You end up with less than what you started with.

[14:47] And instead, he is finding that despite his efforts at subtraction, the Israelite people are multiplying. And then we read this, verse 22.

Pharaoh then commanded, note it, all his people. Now it is the law of the land. You must throw every son born to the Hebrews into the Nile.

But, let every daughter live. What a series of seemingly unfortunate events. Does this sound like your life going really well until it's not?

And suddenly you are experiencing emotional whiplash. And you feel like you are just jerked around back and forth and back and forth and things are not getting better and then worse.

Things are getting worse and then more worse and more worse. And you wonder, I don't know if I can take any more. And you look really hard for evidence of God's grace and there is none.

[16:09] And you cry out, where are you, Lord? Lord? Why is this happening to me? Why is my life so very hard?

Why can't I catch a break? And after decades of darkness and despair and death, hope seems almost gone in Egypt for God's people.

Almost gone. Chapter 2 and verse 1. Now, a man from the family of Levi married a Levite woman. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

When she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. Why are they hiding him?

Well, because they saw something in him. Why are they hiding him? Because the law of the land is that he needs to die. He was illegal.

[17:17] Verse 3. But when she could no longer hide him, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with asphalt and pitch.

And she placed the child in it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. And then his sister stood at a distance in order to see what would happen to him.

Now, we know what's going to happen here, right? This baby is definitely going to die of either dehydration or malnutrition or exposure or a crocodile is going to gobble him up.

If it was love that motivated her to hide her baby for three months, then I suspect it may have been fear that motivated her to make this change.

She's thinking, I have no choice. I have no other options in this matter. What am I going to do? I can't continue to hide this crying baby who is getting louder and louder and bigger and so on.

[18:28] But the book of Hebrews tells us that this mother is not at all motivated by love, nor is she motivated by fear.

This mother is motivated by faith. Hebrews 11, 23, by faith Moses after he was born was hidden by his parents for three months because they saw that the child was beautiful and they didn't fear the king's edict.

Despite the wretchedness of their circumstances, despite the silence of God, despite the lack of evidence in their circumstances of God's grace or God's promises or God's goodness to them, these parents trust in God.

Verse 4, then his sister, back in Exodus, his sister stood at a distance in order to see what would happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe at the Nile while her servant girls walked along the riverbank.

She saw the basket among the reeds, sent her slave girl, took it, opened it, and saw him, the child, and there he was, a little baby boy, crying.

[20 : 03] And she felt sorry for him and she said, this is one of the Hebrew boys. And then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, should I go and call a Hebrew woman who is nursing to nurse the boy for you?

Go, Pharaoh's daughter told her. So the girl went and called the boy's mother. And then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, take this child and nurse him for me and I will pay you your wages.

So the woman took the boy and nursed him. And when the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses because she said, I drew him out of the water.

This is providence. Providence is God always working for his glory and the good of his people. consider how God works through this series of providential events. Moses' parents defy the Pharaoh and hide their baby for three months.

[21 : 29] Moses' mother prepares a basket, places her baby in the basket at the very place where Pharaoh's daughter bathed and on bath day and at bath time.

And the princess, in outright rebellion to her father's direct order to kill every Hebrew baby, pities this crying baby and adopts this baby, welcoming him into the most powerful house in Egypt.

And Moses' sister mother has the courage and the charisma to approach the princess and with this wonderful little wit and wisdom offer to go find a nursing mother to take care of this baby.

And the princess not only accepts the offer of help, she pays one of the Hebrew slaves to raise her own son.

God's love now, each of these events isolated from one another seem insignificant.

[22 : 49] And even as we read through them, we might not notice this chain of providential events, but when we get to the end and we realize what has happened here in these ten verses, and we look back through it and we trace God's hand through this and we realize that though he is not mentioned, he is active and present and working.

We recognize this is providence. God is always working for his glory and the good of his people. only God could orchestrate these extraordinary events this way. I love how providence is closely associated with irony.

And you know that I love irony, so let me just share three. The king of Egypt, the most powerful man in the world, wants all of the babies killed.

three women cooperate to save one of those babies. The Nile is a place of death.

[24 : 13] It is a watery cemetery for all of the Hebrew boy babies. But the princess resurrects this baby from the dead.

Do you see that? This is resurrection language. She's saying, I drew him out of that Nile river.

That's a cemetery for every other baby.

Did you have one of those little babies growing up? Some of you young girls might remember water babies. Remember, they were filled with some kind of watery jelly stuff so that the babies would be kind of warm and they wouldn't be so you feel like Moses is the very first water baby.

That's what the princess says. I drew him out of the water so I name him water baby. the third irony. This baby will grow up to become the man that God will use to fulfill his promise and deliver his people out of Egypt.

[25 : 26] The exact outcome that the Pharaoh feared which is what led him to begin murdering the babies in the first place.

He was afraid that they were all going to leave. And so he starts murdering the babies only to find out that one of these babies is the one who will actually lead the people out of Egypt.

Pharaoh's problem, he is utterly opposed to the one outcome that God is absolutely committed to. by his providence God has these three women and a baby right where he wants them.

Baby Moses will be nourished, nurtured, trained by his mother, and he will also be trained and protected as the adopted son of the princess of Egypt.

Now note this, Moses' parents, they are not Abel or Enoch or Noah or Abraham or Sarah or Isaac or Jacob.

[26 : 51] They are not among the patriarchs. These are unknown hidden figures two among a crowd of slaves. Hebrews 11 and Exodus 1 and 2 don't even give us their names.

These are ordinary people like us. And so we can learn from their example. What is faith? What does faith look like?

What is the shape of faith? What are the contours of faith? Well back in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 23 faith focuses on God's promises.

Fear frets about circumstances and these circumstances that they find themselves in could not be more bleak. Like a thoroughly cleaned crime scene that still smells of bleach.

If they go looking for evidence of God's grace in their circumstances they are not going to find one bit of evidence. If they dwell on the awful circumstances that they find themselves in they are certainly going to give up.

[28 : 13] This is what Paul writes about in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verse number 16 notice this therefore we do not give up.

Well how's that? How is it that we're not going to give up? Because even though our outer person is being destroyed our inner person is being renewed day by day for our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.

How so Paul? Because I feel like giving up. Have you seen my circumstances? You see the weights that are pressing down on me?

How is it that we are not going to give up? Verse 18 we do not focus on what is seen but on what is unseen for what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.

What is faith? Faith focuses on God's promises. We do not give up. We do not look to our circumstances for evidence of God's grace because we have God's invisible unchangeable promises to us in our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 52] Faith focuses on God's promises but also faith creates courage. Fear is going to cause us to fret about our circumstances.

This is totally natural. If your circumstances feel overwhelming it's totally natural for you to fear to be fearful and to fret about those circumstances.

That is no surprise at all. But faith creates a supernatural kind of resolve in God's people.

This reminds me so much of Daniel's three friends. Standing before the king, perhaps their backs being warmed up by the furnace that they are standing in front of and the king says you have one more chance.

I'm paraphrasing a bit. One more chance and they say we don't even need one more chance. We will not bow. Fear makes us fret about our circumstances.

[31 : 02] That's natural to be fearful about the world that we live in and the things that we're facing. But faith in God's promises stirs up a supernatural kind of resolve that makes people say we will not bow and makes other people say we will not murder our child.

We will not bow to the king's order. You see that there in Hebrews 11 23 they were not afraid. They knew the risks.

they undoubtedly weighed the consequences and then in faith they act in defiance of the king's order.

Why? Because they recognize an authority greater than the most powerful man on earth. Faith creates courage and so they hide their baby.

They hide their baby until that is no longer possible and then when they find themselves at this impossible decision where fear is stirring up all kinds of fretting in them they need to make an impossible choice we can't continue to hide this baby whatever are we going to do there are no good options here faith acts wisely they act with intentionality they make an ark they cover it with pitch they put it among the reeds they station the sister they have raised a daughter with this wit that is well beyond her age biblical faith is not a leap in the dark it's not a holy hope so biblical faith is careful thoughtfulness about God and his promises that what that nourishes hope and catalyzes obedience that's faith faith causes us not to act foolishly or irrationally not to act negligently or carelessly no faith causes us to act wisely they didn't know the outcome of these decisions they couldn't know the future any more than you and

[33 : 36] I can know the future but here's the fourth thing faith cooperates with God they didn't know that they didn't know that they were cooperating with God by faith they preserve the life of the deliverer the outcome of their faith is greater than the initial obedience implied do you see that the

outcome of their faith is greater than their initial obedience implied it's like dropping food coloring in white vanilla frosting it doesn't take very many drops to get the color that you want faith is like that because why faith is cooperating with almighty God the outcome of faith is often greater than initial obedience implies what will the outcome of your faith be what will be the outcome of your faith in your discipleship relationships what will be the outcome of your faith in your relationship in caring for your neighbor what will be the outcome of your faith in your marriage what will be the outcome of your faith in parenting what will be the outcome of your faith in shepherding in the ways and words of

Jesus what will be the outcome of your faith in caring for your co-workers ministering What will be the outcome of your faith in being present with your brothers and sisters?

Knowing one another. Walking with one another. Caring for one another. Reminding one another of the promises of God. What will be the outcome of our faith?

Only eternity will tell that whole story. By their faithful, courageous obedience, these unnamed people are swept up into God's redemptive plan.

The plan to provide a deliverer for his people. Talking about a deliverer makes me think of another woman and another baby.

[36 : 11] And we read about them in Galatians chapter 4. Galatians chapter 4 and verse number 4. Listen to these words.

When the time came to completion, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

What is this fullness of time? What is this completion of time? Israel in the time of Jesus, they are under the boot of Rome. If they are looking to their circumstances for evidence of God's grace, they are going to be fearful and fretful.

God has been silent for centuries. No word from the Lord. No prophet from the Lord. But when the fullness of time came, God sent his son, who like Moses, was threatened by a powerful king.

But Mary and Joseph's courageous faith in God's promises preserves Jesus, ironically, by going to Egypt so that they also could come back out of Egypt.

[37 : 39] And from his birth, Jesus perfectly obeys the law that Moses could only mediate to God's people.

And then Jesus dies, and by his death, becomes the mediator, not of the old covenant, but the mediator of a new and better covenant.

See, like Moses, Jesus was also resurrected, not figuratively, from the waters of the Nile, but literally resurrected from the dead.

And through his resurrection, Jesus frees those who are held in slavery by fear of death. Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 15. I wonder, is Jesus your deliverer?

Is Jesus your redeemer? Is Jesus your mediator of the new and better covenant? Is Jesus your savior? And if you say, yes, he is, have you thanked him recently?

[38 : 45] Where does your life feel darkest right now?

Where does your life feel most difficult? Most weighed down? Like you can't possibly take one more plate. Where does your life feel most hopeless?

Where do you feel like giving up? Fear frets about circumstances.

While faith focuses on God's promises. God has not forgotten you, child of God. Jesus has promised he will never leave you.

And the Holy Spirit inside of you is all the evidence that you need. All of the evidence of God's promise to you. And so Paul can rightly say, don't give up.

[39 : 47] Don't give up. Why not? Because we're not going to look at our circumstances. If we look there, we are going to be fearful and fretful. We are not going to look at our circumstances.

We're not going to look at the things that are seen. We're going to keep our eyes on the invisible, unseen promises of the eternal, all-powerful, unchanging God.

God is still working all things for his glory and your good.

And so by faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, focus on God's promises. Obey courageously. Act wisely.

And watch God work out his will and accomplish his purposes in ways that are so far abundant, so far greater than anything you can possibly imagine right now.

[40 : 56] Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for your word. Grateful for the record of these unnamed women.

Grateful for these reminders, the importance and the value and the contours and the shape of faith. Help us to be the kinds of people who hear your word and like looking in a mirror, see our reflection. And we don't walk away and say, oh, that was really something. No, we see our reflection. We see where there is a need.

We see where there is doubt and discouragement and disillusionment and depression and despair. We see those things and we recognize it is because I am focusing on my circumstances and the things that are seen.

Oh, Lord, forgive us again and again and again and renew our faith and cause us instead to focus on your promises to us in Christ, which are always yes and amen.

[42 : 12] Father, if there is one here today who has never trusted in Jesus, they don't know the Lord Jesus as their deliverer, their mediator, their savior, their redeemer.

Please grant life and faith. Cause that person to respond by repenting and believing. We ask this for your glory and for our good.

In Jesus' name. Amen.