

Jochabed, Moses' Mother

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back for a short time then to the chapter we had there, Exodus chapter 2. Exodus chapter 2. We're looking at a chunk of this chapter and we'll be going also elsewhere later on to Hebrews, but we'll get to there in a second, just one or two verses.

We're spending most of our time here in chapter 2. Of course, this chapter features its main character. You could say the main emphasis, our minds go first to Moses, but quite literally before Moses, there's that story we know so well.

Many of us heard it in Sunday school. Many of us perhaps drew it or made wee baskets ourselves, but who, at least at the start of chapter 2, who is the focus of this chapter?

It's not Moses. It's Moses' mother. This obscure woman whose name isn't even mentioned in this chapter.

The chapter where she's talked about the most, her name isn't given to us. Her name isn't mentioned later on until Exodus chapter 6, verse 20. We're given the lineage of Moses and Aaron, and there we're told her name is Jochebed.

[1 : 12] Jochebed. For a short time together today, I want to look at the life and the witness and the work and the way the Lord used this almost nameless woman for his glory, for his purpose.

And in doing that, I want us to think about ourselves, about yourselves here in Carly. Again, it's been many years since I was here. Enough time has passed in that there's some faces I actually don't recognise.

Now, some faces I do, and I know you and you know me, but there's some faces here I don't recognise. And for a short time together today, I want us, both brothers and sisters and friends, to focus our minds on how the Lord uses his glorious, his daring, his beloved daughters to accomplish his perfect plan.

Despite what many may think or say, and despite, sadly, what sisters, what I'm sure many of you have experienced in your time in the church.

I say the church, I don't mean just Carly, I mean the church in general. The gathering of God's people across your lives. I'm almost certain if I asked you, have you experienced what it is to be put aside, to be considered and to feel like you're less than your brothers?

[2 : 39] I think to our shame and to the sadness of all the church, I hope you would say, yeah, you have. You have experienced what it is to not feel perhaps as valued or as essential as your brothers.

Now, that might sound controversial, but it's not, is it? Okay, I'm not talking about Carly. It's one good thing about doing a supply. I'm just passing through. I don't know what's going on in the ground here.

I hear many good things. But perhaps, sisters, you know what it is to have been looked down on, to not be treated to the same level of godly respect as you should be.

It's even more heartbreaking when you go back to church history and you see the early church. What is one of the reasons, and often one of the most quoted reasons, in the secular Roman sources for why the Romans did not trust the Christians.

There's the obvious reasons that the Christians wouldn't worship their gods and the Christians did things differently. There's one recurring reason why the Romans, at least for Roman state, did not like the early church.

[3 : 53] It's because of the way they treated women. They gave women a place of importance. They taught, as Paul did, they preached, that that woman and that man are equally made by God.

Yes, different roles within the church. Yes, whatever, that is fine. But equal importance, equal glory, equal beauty, equal emphasis in the scriptures, where Paul says, again and again, what?

There's no more male or female Jew or Greek, that in Christ we are one. Now, the Roman state hated that. It's one of the reasons they would persecute, or at least be against the early church. And here we have one of the very earliest women here mentioned in scripture, Jochebed. Now, we'll see in a second, her story is by no means simple or easy for us to understand or to follow along with.

But we do see from her story as an example of how she is a shadow, how she was there to point forward to what one would do in the future, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 04] Now, Jochebed forms an essential part in the wider plan of God. And that is no less true for any of the brothers, but indeed the sisters here today.

Just two simple headings for us. First of all, we see a messy history and then a brave mother. A messy history and a brave mother.

First of all, then a messy history. If you turn just forward there to Exodus 6 and verse 20, again where Jochebed is named, we find out some information about her.

Exodus 6 verse 20, Amran took as his wife Jochebed, his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. The years of the life of Amran being 137 and so on.

Perhaps we're guilty, I certainly am, of taking our biblical heroes, the characters, the individuals in scripture that we like, we make them somehow different to us.

[6 : 11] What do I mean? Well, take Samson, for example. Recently, a few months ago now, in Tolstair, we were doing a series going through some of these well-known individuals and an older member of my congregation jokingly grabbed me and said, you've ruined Samson for me.

You've ruined him. What do you mean? Sorry. Did I preach it that badly? No, what she meant was, she had this image of him being a real hero, a real incredible, powerful man. And the Bible shows us, yes, the Lord used him, but actually, he's pretty horrible at times.

He does pretty grim things at times. He is led by things that are not holy at times. And what she's saying was, the preaching reminded her that he was just like her and like me, like all of us.

We are guilty of making heroes, of making these individuals something different. Brothers and sisters and friends, when we read about individuals in Scripture, yes, the Lord used them, the Lord blessed them, but they're just like us.

Yes, a few thousand years ago and a few thousand miles away, but they're like us. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, children, they're like normal people. And Jochebed was a normal woman.

[7 : 26] And because she was a normal woman, life was complicated. Life was messy. If you notice there, as you read in 6, verse 20, she married Amran.

But who is Amran to Jochebed? Well, Jochebed is his father's sister. Messy, complicated.

The Bible's very clear here that Jochebed, who she married to, but Amran marries his auntie. Uncomfortable, messy, strange.

Scripture is often, and you guys will know this yourselves, Scripture is often uncomfortable to read. Why? Because it's God's word. And because it is God's word, God does not hide anything.

He shows us as we are. He speaks truthfully about us, to ourselves. And God records it as it took place. Now, technically, the law for not marrying your auntie will come in later in Scripture.

[8 : 40] But it doesn't take a law from on high to tell you that's not a good idea. And it's a complicated situation. It's a complicated situation. A messy family dynamic.

But it seems that they're good parents. It seems that they care, of course, for Moses and for Aaron and for the children. They seem to do their best to look after them and keep them.

But just to note for ourselves, they are normal people with complicated backgrounds, with messy family stories. And, dear sisters, I'm not sure anyone here has a story as complicated, perhaps, or a family dynamic, as confusing, perhaps, as Jochebed.

But each one of us have our story to tell, as it were. Each one of us here have histories that are perhaps full of pain. Histories perhaps full of shame, of embarrassment, whatever your story might be.

And your past is not unimportant. Your past, of course, it does shape who you and who I am. But our past, we'll see in Jochebed's story, our past does not define who God makes us to be or how the Lord can and will use us for his purposes, for his glory.

[10 : 02] Here we have Jochebed, a complicated, just weird, uncomfortable family dynamic. And yet the Lord will use her mightily to do an incredible work.

Yes, a messy situation that leads us to her, our main point today, being an incredibly brave mother, an incredibly brave mother.

If you turn your eyes back to the end of chapter 1, sorry, in verse 22, the end of that story, chapter 1, verse 22, where Pharaoh commands all his people, every son that is born to the Hebrews, you shall cast into the Nile, but let every daughter live.

Live. Remember the account that Pharaoh has decided for various reasons that there are too many Israelites being born, too many Israelite men being born.

He is worried for how they will influence his control and power, and so on. So he's decreed that they are to be killed, thrown into the Nile, murdered.

[11 : 11] Before that, you see that he's instructed Hebrew midwives to kill the Hebrew boys that are being born. And that's a whole different sermon of these brave women, how they've managed to not do that.

But because they've not done that, because the Hebrew midwives have let the Hebrew boys be born and haven't killed them, Pharaoh has now given a blanket ruling. Every Hebrew boy, every Hebrew son born, will be cast into the Nile.

He is calling for a genocide. He is calling for a mass murder. Every child born, if it's a boy, is to be drowned or murdered some other way.

Brutal. Horrifying. Again, this is not just an account. This is not just a story. This was real. This happened. There are countless families, slave families, who are already living in horrendous situations, who are now having their children ripped from their arms, and thrown into the river.

This is dark. This is grim. This is the reality into which Moses is born. But Jochebed gives birth to this boy.

[12 : 27] She defies the king, of course. She has a child. And we see here, for several months, she keeps it quiet. Here's the amazing thing.

Think about how close the slave quarters, the slave quarters, a small community, they're living close together. The Egyptians and the soldiers, we are sure, would be on the lookout, on the hunt for any male children being born, to cast them, to kill them into the river.

But we see that for several months, for three months, Jochebed keeps this baby boy quiet. She looks after him. She protects him until she couldn't do it any longer.

Perhaps he's getting a bit too loud. Perhaps things are getting a bit too close, too dangerous. And again, we know the account, but let's stop for a second and see what takes place. Let's not just make a Sunday school story or even a Bible story, but let's think, this is a real woman.

Sisters, this is a real woman who did a real thing here. Her baby boy, she can't do it any longer. She can't keep him secret any longer. This woman isn't just faithful.

[13 : 38] This woman is also, we see, a very smart woman. Verse three, she makes a basket for him. She makes it waterproof. She waterproofs it in two different ways.

She's a very careful woman. She's got two levels, two layers of waterproofing. It's more in some boats I've been on in my time. She does two layers of waterproofing and she puts a child in it. Safe and sound as best she can. And she places him in the reeds in a place where she knew Pharaoh's daughter would come and bathe and the Egyptian woman of high class would hopefully stumble upon it.

But she leaves the child there with her daughter close by, keeping an eye on things. sadly the time has come.

She must trust the Lord and let her child go out into the world as it were. She makes a basket. She's daring, but it seems that she trusts God. And here we see something amazing.

[14 : 41] Jochebed's very name, if you translate it, it means God's glory or God's power, depending on the context. She's named God's power and she must trust in God's power.

And she entrusts her child. God has given her a child. God has kept her child safe so far. And she lets that child, as it were, quite literally go now out into the river.

Now we see a glimpse here of another brave woman, Jochebed's daughter, who has clearly taken after her mother. We see Miriam waiting, biding her time. And the second that Moses has discovered, this baby has discovered, Miriam seems to pop out out of the bushes, out of the rushes, and say, we can look after him, I can find someone to look after him.

And because of a very intelligent mother, because of a daughter who's taken after her mother, we then see the incredible situation where yes, Moses belongs now to Pharaoh's daughter.

But in verse 9, we see Moses will be nursed and weaned until he's weaned by his own mother. God's care in the situation, making all things right in the end, just for a while.

[15 : 55] Relief, yes, then joy, yes, but heartbreak, because look what takes place next. We perhaps read past this so quickly, but again, this is a real woman and her real son, her wee baby, verse 10, when the child grew up, Jochebed brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son.

Moses escaped. Why on earth is he now, is he giving him up again? They're slaves. There's no future for them. They don't know what God's about to do.

We do. They don't know that. Jochebed doesn't know that. They're slaves. She seeks to give her child the best future possible, trusting in God, the Lord who knows, the Lord who sees, the Lord who guides.

She trusts in him and she returns the child back to Pharaoh's daughter. we can't begin, many of us, to understand the heartbreak, but she knows this is what will be best for her baby child.

And now Pharaoh's daughter names him Moses. I threw him out of the water. the sacrifice of this woman.

[17 : 20] She's willing to disobey, to defy the very Pharaoh, the very high king's order to have a child. She's then willing to go to great lengths to protect and look after and love and keep that child.

She's then even willing, as it were, to give that child away to have a better chance of survival of life. And really, thus ends Jochebed's story for us, in one sense.

She's just lost her baby boy. She's given him up and to a better life and off he goes. Now we, of course, follow Moses' story. But really, it's in Hebrews 11, verse 23 onwards, we get a complete story of the life of Moses.

And here we see the reality that Jochebed, Moses' mother, did what she could. But she would never imagine, as she gives her wee child away, as she then places him before that into the reeds, as she looks after him for these three months in defiance of the very Pharaoh himself, keeping him safe and protected, as she places him in that basket in the reeds, as she waits for news, as she then weans him, looks after him for a while and gives him back.

What Jochebed did not know is something that we know. Again, it's Hebrews 11. If you have time today, read it yourselves this afternoon. Hebrews 11 summarises for us Jochebed, Jochebed did what she could and because of the care and love of this godly mother, the Lord then takes this child who had no hope, who had no future, and we know, of course, ourselves, that one day this wee baby who Jochebed looked after so well, he would one day meet with the living God.

[19 : 20] He would one day hear from the living God. He would one day be led by the one true living God. This wee boy would one day rescue his people, bring his people into salvation, away from their captors.

This wee boy, her wee boy, that she did so much for, would one day be used by the Lord to bring about, yes, not just freedom from slavery, but then the freedom and the beginning of a great nation would one day lead to the very birth of our Saviour.

In the narrative, it's one name, it's one woman, it's one story, but in God's eternal plan, Jochebed had and has an essential and deeply important purpose.

If she hadn't served the Lord to the death of our ability, Moses is not kept safe, Moses is then not rescuing his people, the people live and die in slavery and the whole gospel account ends somewhere at the start of Exodus.

But she is faithful, she trusts the Lord, the Lord blesses that, the Lord looks after Moses, the Lord uses that wee boy, Jochebed's wee boy, to bring salvation to hundreds of thousands of people.

[20 : 53] Sisters, never underestimate the way that the Lord can make full use of who you are and the gifts he has given you. Whether that's perhaps through children or through other connections you have in this world, never think of yourself too small or too useless.

This is not just a pep talk, this is a truth from God's very word. The Lord takes what the world sees as small and useless, the Lord takes what we ourselves perhaps think of ourselves as being small and useless and the Lord uses that for his glory.

The efforts of Jochebed eventually lead to the salvation and rescue of tens of hundreds of thousands, eventually four or five plus million Jewish slaves are freed and begin their journey into the desert.

That then leads eventually to the birth of a saviour, all tracing its way back to one woman who trusted in the Lord. Your service, your work, sisters, to the Lord, again, to our shame perhaps goes often unseen, often unfanked.

the Lord sees, the Lord knows, and the Lord uses small service to his infinite purposes and your small service in the hands of God is worth infinitely more than you can begin to imagine.

[22 : 26] I'm going to conclude by talking and telling us a story of a woman, a real woman called Eliza. She was born in the early 1830s.

Now, Eliza had a very difficult pregnancy, so difficult that the baby had to go to its grandparents for a while. Eliza was the wife of a man called John.

He was a minister of an incredibly busy congregation. So, as it is, Eliza was often left with the care of her several children.

The pressure, the stress, the burdens, and John was very worried, so worried of all stress his wife was under. He writes that one day he came home and I opened the door and was surprised to find none of the children in the hall.

Going quietly upstairs, I heard my wife's voice. She was engaged in prayer with all the children. I heard her pray for them one by one, name by name.

[23 : 37] Then she came to the eldest and especially prayed for him. He was of high spirit, ill health, and daring temper. I listened till she had ended her prayer and I know the Lord had given me a wife I did not deserve.

And I knew the children would be well cared for. Eliza would weekly read a big Bible passage and then daily break that passage down with her children.

Day by day she would teach them, pray with them, sing with them. Years would pass by and there was no gospel change with her children. She prayed every day for her children and nothing happened.

Nothing happened. nothing happened. Until one day Eliza received a letter from her eldest son. This son that was born so ill that caused her so much problems.

This son whose temper was pretty hot. This son who was so daring, who broke so many bones apparently in his youth. And Eliza, the faithful mother, received a letter that said, your birthday will now be doubly memorable.

[24 : 55] For on the 3rd of May, the boy for whom you so often prayed, the boy of your hopes and fears, your first born who caused you so much trouble and distress and worry, he will join the visible church of redeemed on earth and will bind himself doubly to the Lord his God by open profession.

The letter carried on. You, my dear mother, you have been the great means in God's hands of rendering to me salvation.

I feel prepared to follow my Saviour, not only into the water, but should he call me even into the fire. I love you, my mother, as the preacher to my heart of such courage as my praying, watching, ever-loving mother, yours in love, Charles Spurgeon, a quiet woman doing her best, for a child who caused her apparently quite a lot of trouble.

She quietly, daily endeavoured to do the best she could to the Lord's service and the Lord used the work of one woman to bring as part of the salvation story of Charles Spurgeon, a man who we know the Lord would use to bring many thousands into the kingdom.

You beloved, you glorious, you known from eternity, daughters of the king, never, ever doubt your influence in the work of the Lord or your importance in the work of his kingdom.

[26 : 38] Like Jochebed, like Eliza, trust the Lord will use you, trust he is able to use you, and trust that he has a specific place for you in his kingdom.

To brothers and sisters, that is true. Friends, again, some faces I don't know, I don't know where you stand with the Lord. All we've said today is of course applied only really to those here who know Jesus, who love Jesus.

If you're here today and if you as of yet don't know what it is to serve him or to love him, but if you're here, we are so thankful you are here, perhaps you've got big questions, please ask your minister or your elders, we'd be very glad to answer them.

But my question for you is, see, Jochebed trusted, Jochebed trusted even in the most unlikely circumstances, in dangerous circumstances, she trusted God.

She knew God would work all things out. Even Spurgeon's mother, Eliza, trusted God would work all things out. Ask any of the brothers or sisters here today, of what is their hope.

[27 : 42] They'll say, sometimes life is complicated and grim, and sometimes I can't see a way forward, but we know God is in full control, and he will work all things out for his glory.

my question for you is, where does your hope, where does your hope get founded? What's the difference?

What's the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian? Is it how we dress or how we speak or how we act? What's the core difference between the Christian and the non-Christian here today?

It's not culture or heritage or history or Bible knowledge. The Christians know God and are known by him.

We trust in his perfect plan, that he is a good God who makes all things perfect in his time. My friends, our prayer, our hope is, like Jochebed, perhaps even like Eliza, you would come to know and trust in the God who promises, who said to the boys and the girls, who promises never to leave us or forsake us, who look after us, who will keep us all the days of our lives.

[29 : 00] Spirit hates now, a word of prayer. Amen.