

Called To Gods Purpose

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[0 : 00] Well, if you've ever sat in the traffic department or in home affairs, you'll know the feeling of wondering whether anything is actually happening behind the scenes, right?

You've filled out your forms, you've given them to the lady at the desk, and then you go and you take your number and you sit in the seat, right? Those long queues of seats. You know what I'm talking about?

You've been there? Put up your hand if you've been in that situation. Yeah, most of us have in South Africa. And you sit there. And you can't see what's happening. You don't know what's happened to your forms.

You don't know if they've just been thrown in the bin, for all you know. And, you know, you wonder if they've been lost or forgotten or whether they're actually in the process.

You really need to have faith sitting there. You've got to have faith in the process that your forms are being dealt with, that something's happening, even though you've been waiting there for three hours. Now, in South Africa, I admit it's very hard to have that faith because sometimes your forms do get forgotten and lost.

[1 : 06] But God is not like that. God doesn't forget. Nothing slips his attention. And yet I think often as his people, we feel like we're sitting there and nothing's happening behind the scenes.

I think God's people often find themselves struggling to believe that he's actually doing anything, especially when we're going through trouble, especially when things are just not working out and we're waiting for our prayers to be answered, but they don't seem to be answered.

And we wonder, is anything actually happening behind the scenes or have I been forgotten? I think that's definitely something God's people must have struggled with in Exodus as they endured suffering in Egypt, where we find ourselves here in Exodus chapter 2.

As we get to this chapter, they are in trouble. If you were here last week, you'll know. God's people are in a really bad situation. They've become slaves. There's this genocide starting against them and their God seems so far away.

In fact, as we read the story in chapter 2, I wonder if you noticed, God is not mentioned in most of the chapter. I think the writer deliberately does that to give us a sense of what the Israelites were feeling.

[2 : 25] And yet as we read the story, it shows us that God is still there and he's actually far more involved than we think in what's happening to his people.

And we know because when we get to the end of the chapter, what do we read? Have a look from verse 23 to 25. So halfway through verse 23, the Israelites groaned out because of their difficult labor.

They cried out. They're still groaning, crying out, God, where are you? What are you doing? And their cry for help because of the difficult labor ascended to God. Now look at the last verse.

God heard their groaning. This is the last verse of this chapter where God seems so far away, seems not there. God heard their groaning. God remembered his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

God saw the Israelites. And I love this. And God knew. God knew. He had been there all along. He knew what they were going through.

[3 : 32] And so let's read the story in light of the last verse. Let's now read the story again, but see, spot how God's invisible hand is at work in all of it.

So Pharaoh commands, by the beginning of Exodus 2, Pharaoh commands that all the baby boys of the Israelites must be drowned in the Nile.

They must be thrown into the Nile. A terrible royal edict because he's threatened, we saw last week, he's threatened by the Israelites. They're a political threat to him. And so he wants to, but he's also, we also know, he's inspired by deeper, darker evil forces.

As anybody who says, you know, drowned babies in a river must be. So he says, all the baby boys must be thrown into the Nile. And he has his soldiers policing that.

But one clever mother reckons, well, he didn't technically say they can't be in a boat when we throw them in the Nile. So she made a boat. Look at verse 3 and 4.

[4 : 33] But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.

His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Can you imagine what was going on in her heart when she put her baby, who she'd been nursing for three months, in a boat in the Nile?

I mean, no matter how well she made that boat, and she seemed to have made it pretty well, tar and pitch. I made a fair few model boats in my time. But it's really hard to actually make a boat that manages to float properly in the water and stay there.

But no matter how good her construction of this little boat was, the chance of survival in the Nile is pretty slim. When you send a baby out by itself, I mean, babies are helpless little creatures, right? They can't fend for themselves. And you send this out in the Nile, Nile full of crocodiles. And if he doesn't get taken by the crocodiles, who would consider this baby in a basket a lovely midday snack, then he'll most likely be seen by the soldiers.

[5 : 49] You see, one of the babies is realizing how scary that would have been for little Moses. And you've got the soldiers patrolling the bank as well.

If the crocks don't get them, the soldiers probably will. And yet, as we read on, one of the most unlikely things happens. Look at verse 5 to 6.

Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe. Pharaoh's daughter enters the scene. Now, just keep in mind, this is the daughter of the man who ordered all the babies killed.

And her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it.

Now, in the same scene is Moses' sister, who we later find out is named Miriam. She is one of the attendants of Pharaoh's daughter. How that came about, we don't know.

[6 : 47] What a coincidence. Anyway, there she is. And she must be watching this. She sees her baby brother in the basket. And she sees Pharaoh's daughter realizing he's there.

That's who finds him. She must be holding her breath. What's going to happen now? This is part of the royal court. This is Pharaoh's daughter. Is she going to turn him in?

She must be so scared right now. And we read on. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying. And it turns out that saved his life. Because when the moment she heard that particular frequency that is designed by God to come from a baby's mouth, it triggered in her her maternal instinct, which is also designed by God.

And she, next line, felt sorry for him. She had compassion on him. This is one of the Hebrew babies, she said. So, that's already a number of unlikely things has happened.

[7 : 52] How his sister is there. It's discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. But of all the people, she has compassion on this baby. How unlikely. But that's not the end. It gets more unlikely. Look at from verse 7.

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you? Yes, go. So, she's probably thinking, That's a lucky turn of events.

And the girl went and got the baby's mother. How unlikely is that? Not only is Pharaoh's daughter not going to kill this baby, but she gives Pharaoh's sister the chance to get his mother to come look after it.

I mean, what a coincidence. How unlikely is that? And it gets even more crazy. Verse 9. I love this. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.

I mean, moms, would you like being paid to look after your own children? So, not only is he saved from death, not only is he brought into the best upbringing he could possibly be brought into, the palace of Egypt, but his own mother gets to look after him and gets paid for it.

[9 : 07] I mean, that's a pretty chance series of events, isn't it? It's quite a lot of coincidences that happen there.

But as you read it, you soon begin to realize this is not just coincidence, is it? This is not just a series of lucky events.

Because we've read the last verse of the chapter, and we know that although God seems far away, he's not. He knows. He sees. And he is intimately involved in the preservation of this baby boy. Why? He's not intimately involved in the preservation of everyone like this. He's not involved in everyone's life like this, but he's involved in the life of this baby boy in every particular detail. Why? Well, the hint is actually in verse 3. Look at verse 3. When she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch.

[10 : 13] Does that ring any bells from Genesis? Well, if you read it in the Hebrew, you would know immediately it would ring a bell because the word for basket is the word for ark.

Noah's ark. The same word. And those are the only two times in the Bible it's ever used in describing Noah's ark and in describing Moses' ark. It's the vessel of salvation, basically. And so this is a deliberate connection. And by the way, Noah also coated the ark in tar and pitch, just like Moses' mother did. Because the author is deliberately showing us that God was doing something here.

Just as God saved Noah through the waters, and why did he save Noah through the waters? We know from Genesis is because of his covenant with Noah. He made this special relationship with Noah that he made with no one else.

This covenant, this special relationship where he saves and calls someone to his purpose. And so he saved Noah through water in the ark and he is now doing that again. He is saving and calling Moses through the water in this ark for his purposes and because of his covenant, which we read at the end with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[11 : 32] Because he's already committed himself in this special relationship with Abraham and his descendants, he's now doing what he did with Noah again. He's saving someone and calling him to his purposes.

And because of that, he is intimately involved in every detail of what happens to this baby. When God has committed himself to someone in covenant, he commits to being involved in that person's life.

He commits to being intimately involved in every detail. Imagine that, a God. The God of the universe, the God who causes the planets to spin.

The God who causes the sun to rise. You know, the God who causes plants to grow and crops to come up from the ground and thunderstorms.

That God, imagine that God with that amount of power being intimately involved in setting up every circumstance of your life. Well, you know what?

[12 : 35] You don't have to imagine that if you're a Christian. Because the Bible says that's true of his covenant people today, every single one of them.

Read with me. It'll appear on the screen. Romans 8.28. You know it well if you're a Christian, but read it again in light of the story. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

And so that means if you are called according to his purpose, God is involved in your life, in all things that happen, in every circumstance, for that purpose and for your ultimate good.

God works for the good. That doesn't mean for the comfort, by the way. It doesn't mean to give you the best job or to make you most comfortable or to give you the most money. It means to save you and give you eternal life in his new creation, your ultimate good.

And therefore, he will set up everything in your life in every circumstance and be intimately involved in it for that end to save you and to keep you saved. Because he has the big picture that you don't have, even when you don't know why he's allowing certain things to happen.

[13 : 56] That's what this hugely encouraging verse tells us. God works for the good in all things of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

You know, we read the story in Exodus of Moses and we see God's involvement in his life and how all the circumstances work so well together and we think, wow, wouldn't it be great if that was my life?

You know, wouldn't it be great if God was as involved in my life as he is involved in Moses' life? But yes, if you're in his covenant, God is so incredible, his mind is so all-embracing and he is so powerful that he is willing and able to be as involved, as intimately involved in the life of each of his children called to his purpose today as he was in the life of Moses.

How can he do that? We don't know, but he does. Millions of people who are called to his purpose today, he is involved every second in their life as if that's the only thing he's concentrating on, even though he's concentrating on everything else and running the universe at the same time because he's God and he can do that.

The question then, if that's the case, if that is the huge privilege, that God's people have, the question is, are you one of those people that is called to his purpose?

[15:20] Are you one of the people that Romans 8 is talking about? That's a very important question to ask yourself. God works in all things for the good, ultimate good, of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.

Is that you? Does that describe you? Because here's the sobering reality.

God does not work for the good of everyone. God does not work for the ultimate good of everyone. God sends rain and gives oxygen to everyone, his common grace on the world, but he's not working for everyone's ultimate good.

He was not working in Exodus, he was not working for the good of the Egyptians in all this. In fact, it ended up really badly for them. In the end, as we'll see, God is not working for the good of everyone.

He's working for the good of those who have been called according to his purpose and therefore have you. Well, you can know if you have. You might not feel it, but it's not about feeling.

[16:28] You can know for sure if you've been called according to his purpose, if you believe in Christ and you've been baptized into his name, into his people.

If you've been baptized and you believe, remember Acts chapter 2, Peter is giving this great sermon at Pentecost and the people are cut to the heart and say, what must we do?

Repent and be baptized, he says. Come into the covenant people. Believe in Christ. In other words, repent. Change your minds about him. So if you've changed your mind about Jesus, you know who he is, you believe that, and you've been baptized into his people, then you too have passed through the waters and entered into God's great purpose.

You know, it's no coincidence that each time God saves and calls people to a purpose in the Bible, he does it through water.

Have you noticed that? Noah, saved, called to his covenant through water. Moses, yeah, saved from Pharaoh, called to purpose through water.

[17:35] The Red Sea, God saves Israel, we'll see later in Exodus, and calls them to his purpose at Sinai through water and then in the conquest of the land, when they enter the land and come into their purpose that God saved them for, they do it through water, through the Jordan River.

Why does God do that? Well, not exactly sure, but I think it's got something to do with how he creates order out of the primordial waters in Genesis 1. Remember that? That the earth was just filled with water and then that represented, of course, the chaos of the world and then God brings order out of that, out of the waters.

He almost saves creation out of the waters and in the same way, every time he saves and calls someone to his purpose, he's bringing them out of the chaos of the world and death and hopelessness into order and life and purpose.

And that's why Christians get baptized because they are being saved out of the waters, through the waters to a purpose. And so if you have then been brought to God's purpose into his covenant people through believing and being baptized, then you know what?

The Bible says in all things God is working for your good, your ultimate good. In your current circumstances, whatever they are, and they might be really difficult.

[19:04] I don't know. But if you are called according to God's purpose, you are one of his covenant people, then even those current circumstances have been specifically designed by God and he knows and he sees, even when it doesn't look like he's there and they've been set up by God to achieve his ultimate purposes and your ultimate good.

He would not allow anything in the life of his children that does not contribute in one way or another to their ultimate salvation, saving them and keeping them saved, even when it doesn't seem like it.

And so you can know that the words of Psalm 121 apply to you. Originally, they were written about the Israelites, about the covenant people, and the psalmist was just amazed at God's attention in the life of his covenant people Israel and he wrote these words, He will not let your foot slip. He who watches over you will not sleep. Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Your coming and going. Isn't it quite mind-blowing to think that on your mundane commute to work, the creator of the universe is watching you?

[20 : 32] He's watching over your coming and going. He sees and he knows and he's involved in what happens to you in that day and he is working invisibly behind the scenes even when it doesn't look like it.

And if that's true for your life, which it is, if you love God and are called according to his purpose, then you need to start living as if that's true.

You need to start living like a person who is called to God's purpose in life. You know, what does that look like to be in a place with a purpose?

I just thought of a lifeguard on a beach. You know, you look around a beach on a nice summer's day. Everybody's just relaxing, catching a tan, drinking a cocktail, swimming in the sea.

But there's one guy who's not just messing around. The lifeguard. He's there for a purpose. And so he's not just lying around drinking cocktails and catching a tan.

[21 : 36] He's different. He stands out because he's there to save lives. In the same way, if Christians are called to a purpose, then they don't look like the rest of the world because they've got a job to do to save lives.

And when you're called to a purpose, priorities change. And we see that in the life of Moses. He also realized he was called to a purpose as one of God's covenant people.

But it took him a while, about 40 years, because we only catch up with him after he's had a lovely upbringing in the palace of Egypt.

But look what happens. And we see Moses' faith come to fruition. So Moses became the ideal rescuer.

He's painted in the story actually as the ideal rescuer. He's often intervening and saving the day as we see in the story afterwards with the woman at the well and the shepherds come to bully them and here comes Moses to save the day.

[22 : 45] He's like this kind of superhero. He's painted as the ideal rescuer of the oppressed people of Israel. But what we see is what makes him the ideal rescuer turns out not to be his heroism or his position or his connections in the palace.

But one thing makes him the ideal rescuer for Israel. It's his faith in Israel's invisible God. Look at verse 11 and 12 and how this unexpectedly comes out.

One day after Moses had grown up he went out to his own people and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew one of his own people glancing this way and that and seeing no one he struck the Egyptian and hit him in the sand.

It doesn't look like a very admirable act. In fact on first reading it seems like Moses is committing premeditated murder here. He looks around sees that no one's watching and then gets this guy knocks him and takes him down and puts him in the sand.

Looks like a proper crime being committed. But the meaning of looking around left and right, that's why we think he's doing a scaly thing.

[24 : 12] The meaning is actually that phrase looking left and right is used elsewhere in scripture to talk about looking for justice. And so the meaning is more like he looked around to see if anyone would intervene in this injustice justice.

And no one was there to intervene. And so he stepped up. He intervened. And whether he intended to kill the Egyptian or not, we don't know. Whether it was the wisest thing to do, we don't know, probably not.

But what we do know is that his motives were right. His motives pleased God. And we know that because the New Testament tells us what motivated him to step up and to intervene in that situation.

turn with me to Hebrews 11. It was the New Testament reading earlier today. Hebrews 11 from verse 24.

Now we have the New Testament inspired interpretation of what was going on in Exodus 2 and the events that followed. Hebrews 11:24 to 27.

[25:36] By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

So the moment he intervened, he was choosing, he was making a choice. He was choosing to make himself an enemy of the state in order to defend his people. Verse 26 of Hebrews 11, he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward.

By faith, he left Egypt not fearing the king's anger. He persevered because he saw him who is invisible. That's what motivated Moses to intervene and essentially to change his allegiance and to become a fugitive from justice and to lose everything because he saw him who is invisible.

And he knew that aligning with God's purpose was worth more than all the wealth of Egypt.

It's an interesting line in Hebrews 10 when it says, I wonder if you spotted it, he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ. It's weird. Christ only appeared thousands of years later but what it means is that he prioritized the purpose to which Christ had called him even if he didn't know it was Jesus Christ who we know calling him.

[27:13] He knew he was called to a purpose and it turns out it was actually Christ's purpose, Christ's mission, Christ's people that he was called to and he knew that aligning with that purpose was worth more than anything and so he aligned with God's people because here's the thing, being part of God's purpose means being part of God's people.

You can't be part of God's purpose by yourself. It's not how it works. You become part of God's purpose when you join into God's people. That's what Moses was doing.

He couldn't sit in the palace and fulfill God's purposes. He needed to join himself with God's people even though that would cost him and that is the faith God is looking for in people.

A faith that knows that being part of his people, being part of his covenant and being part of his purpose is worth more than anything that the world could give. It's the faith that Jesus calls his followers to in Mark 8 from verse 34.

Then he called, this is Jesus, he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, if anyone would come after me, if anyone would come and be part of God's purposes, right, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

[28:33] For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?

Is being part of God's people and following Christ and being part of God's covenant more important to you than your career, than your money, than your opportunities, than all the riches of the world? Do you really believe that? because then if you do, if you do, it'll show. It'll be obvious to those around you that those are your priorities, that you're one of God's people.

You can't hide it, you can't hide in the palace. Eventually you'll have to come and align yourself and throw your lot in with God's people, no matter what that costs you, even when it looks crazy to the world, that you're doing that.

Prioritizing involvement in God's purpose, in God's people, in God's covenant. Do you believe that for yourself? That being part of God's people is more important than anything in the world?

[29:51] You might say you do. Well, let me ask you, parents, do you believe that for your children? Do you believe that being part of God's people, being part of God's purposes, is more important for your children than all the riches in the world?

I mean, if you had to choose one of two scenarios for your children, which would you choose of these two? The first one, your child drops out of school, they become a garbage collector for the municipality and they live in a shack, but they go to church, they're involved in God's people.

Scenario one. Scenario two, great marks at school, successful at sport, they go to university, get a great degree, start a business, a number of businesses, they get a beautiful wife, beautiful children, they live in a mansion in bishop's court, church, but they don't go to church.

You had to choose one for your child. Which would you choose? I wonder when I consider how many parents prioritize sport and success and future opportunities in the world for their children as more important than their child's involvement in church and in youth and in the covenant people of God.

Even though that doesn't look important, it is the most important thing in the world because God works for the good of those who are in his covenant, but not for those who are not. And so the most important thing for all of us is to make sure that you and your family are.

[31 : 29] Moses knew that. And he was willing to throw away all that Egypt had to offer to make sure he was part of God's people. Are you? Are you willing to invest everything you have in following Christ and is it clear to those around you that you are?

Or are you still living in the palace of Egypt, more focused on what the world can give you? Because if so, listen again to Jesus' words, what good is it for a man to gain the whole world in and yet forfeit his soul?

Let's pray that that would be true of us. Lord, we are amazed when we think that you are intimately involved in the life of your people and that you have called us through Christ to a real important purpose.

Lord, we admit that we often forget that. We often get drawn to the world and the things that are flashy and the things that look important and so we pray that you would help us to take the example of Moses who neglected all those things so he could be counted as one of your people and help us to change our priorities so that we would also make sure we are counted as one of your people.

We would be involved in your people and we would be involved in your purposes for the world and we would prioritize that over the things of the world. Help us to do that, Lord, and would you fulfill your purposes in and through us in Jesus' name.

[33 : 00] Amen.