

# THE BIRTH OF MOSES: THE PICTURE OF A BELIEVING, COURAGEOUS MOTHER EXODUS 02:01–10

## *Introduction*

This passage covers the birth of Moses, but it focuses upon the mother of Moses. It tells us how she saved Moses from being killed by the king, how she trusted God to take care of her baby boy. Moses' mother was a godly mother, a young woman who trusted God with all her heart. When we survey the pages of human history, godly mothers are few and far between. Mothers who truly believe God — who have the courage to stand up for God and His demand for righteousness and purity — are hard to find upon the face of this earth. Nevertheless, godly mothers do exist. Here and there a few godly mothers can be found. There are some mothers within every generation who have given all they are to God, who are totally committed to follow after the righteousness and purity demanded by God.

This is the subject of the present Scripture: *The Birth of Moses: The Picture of a Believing, Courageous Mother*, Exodus 2:1-10.

- I. She was a Hebrew, of Levi's tribe: a slave of the lowest social rank and position imaginable (v. 1).
- II. She was a courageous, righteous woman (v. 2).
- III. She was a woman of great wisdom: she planned ahead and trusted God completely (vv. 3-4).
- IV. She witnessed the sovereign, guiding hand of God (vv. 5-8).
- V. She had her faith rewarded (vv. 9-10).

## **I. *Exodus 02:01 The Mother of Moses***

Moses' mother was a Hebrew, of Levi's tribe, a slave of the lowest social rank and position imaginable. Remember, Israel had probably been enslaved for a century or more. The parents of Moses were therefore slaves when they married. This meant that both mother and father...

- worked as slave-labourers, as beasts of burden
  - were abused and yelled at, probably cursed and beaten at the whim of slave-masters
  - were poor, even poverty-stricken
  - lived in a small, poorly furnished house or shanty
  - had few, if any, possessions to call their own
  - had no opportunity to do what they wanted
  - could not better themselves
-

Moses' mother had no social standing within society, no decent clothes, no possessions, no rank, no position. She was a slave. She worked in the brickyards or in the fields or as the servant of some wealthy Egyptian. Yet God was to use this humble mother, this enslaved woman, beyond imagination. She was to give birth to one of the greatest men who has ever lived.

**Thought 1.** Moses' mother is a great example to us. No matter how lowly or far down we are, God will use us. God will use us no matter how lowly our...

- past
- education
- abilities
- present
- rank
- heritage
- social standing
- achievement
- possessions
- position
- finances
- appearance

If we will only do what Moses' mother did — believe God and follow after God — God will accept us and use us to bless the lives of many throughout the world. God always uses the lowly who truly trust and follow after Him, uses them to confound and humble those who exalt themselves.

*1 Cor 1:26-29* Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things — that are, so that no one may boast before him.

*Psa 8:2* Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

*Luke 15:1-7* Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders. And goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

## II. *Exodus 02:02 The Courageous and Righteous Mother*

Moses' mother was a courageous, righteous woman. At some point, she became pregnant and bore Moses. This was her third child.

=> *Miriam*, Moses' only sister, was obviously a young lady when Moses was born, probably somewhere around thirteen to sixteen years old (Exo 2:4-8; 15:20; Num 26:59).

=> *Aaron*, Moses' only brother, was three years older than Moses (Exo 7:7).

Note that the king's law to drown all newborn boys was not in effect at Aaron's birth. As stated, he was a three-year old boy, alive and well, when Moses was born. The law was obviously passed right before the birth of Moses.

Picture for a moment the uneasiness of Moses' parents when his mother discovered that she was pregnant. Just imagine their concern, anxiety, fear, uncertainty — wondering what would happen if the child was a boy. What would they do? What could they do? Month after month — for nine long months — they would have prayed and wondered, trying their best to figure out what they would do if the child was a boy.

Then, finally, the day came, and their worst fears became a reality: a baby boy, Moses, was born. Note what his mother did: she did the courageous, righteous thing. She hid the child for three months. Why? What would make her risk her own life to save her child's life? The same thing that has driven many mothers to save their child's life when the child was threatened:

=> love           => righteousness       => duty  
=> justice       => responsibility     => the sanctity of life

But note the phrase “goodly child” (A.V. ) or “fine child” (NIV). This can refer to Moses' physical appearance, meaning that he was a beautiful child (see Gen 39:6). But it can also mean “fair in the sight of God.” In fact, the Greek actually says this in Acts 7:20: “[Moses] was fair in the sight of God” (en asteios to theo). This would seem to be the true meaning of the statement in Exodus.

The point is this: Moses' mother was a courageous, righteous woman. When she looked at Moses, God gave her a sense that her child was special. He was a gift, a very special gift from God. His life was important to God; therefore, she had to be courageous and do the righteous thing: she had to save her child's life. God's purpose for the child was far more important than even her love. Thus, she wanted to save the child not only because she loved him, but also because he was a special gift from God. Therefore, she hid the child for three months. Day after day and week after week — three long months — she hid the child from the authorities and neighbours, from everyone who might be a threat, lest someone report the child's presence. She hid the child at the risk of her own life. Moses' mother was a godly woman, a courageous and righteous woman.

**Thought 1.** What are we to do when the law of the state stands opposed to the law of God? Moses' mother is a strong example for us: quietly and humbly, just as she did, we are to be courageous and righteous: we are to obey God. We are to do the courageous and righteous thing — always.

**Deut 5:29** *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

**Mat 7:21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

**Acts 5:29** Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!”

**Rev 22:14** “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

**Thought 2.** How many parents see their children as Moses’ mother did? How many see them as a gift from God, as very special and important to God? What a different world this would be if parents followed the example of Moses’ mother:

- ⇒ If parents loved their children, truly loved them.
- ⇒ If parents saw their children as *gifts* from God, as very special and important to God.
- ⇒ If parents protected their children, protected them even at the risk of their own lives.
- ⇒ If parents committed their children to God, committed their welfare and care into the hands of God.
- ⇒ If parents led their children to trust God, to trust His promises.
- ⇒ If parents taught their children the Word of God and prayed with them (see note, Exo 2:9-10).

Note what Scripture declares about children. Two significant declarations are made.

(1) Children are the gift of God.

**Gen 33:5** Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. “Who are these with you?” he asked. Jacob answered, “They are the children God has graciously given your servant.”

**Gen 48:9** “They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.”

**Jos 24:3** But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac.

**Psa 113:9** He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.

**Psa 127:3** Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.

**Isa 8:18** Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.

(2) Children must be taught the Word of God and the promises of God. They must be taught to follow after God.

**Deu 4:9** Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

**Deu 6:7** Impress them [God’s Words] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

*Prov 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

*Isa 28:9 Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast?*

*Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

### **III. Exodus 02:03–04 A Woman of Great Wisdom and Trust in God**

Moses' mother was a woman of great wisdom, a woman who planned ahead and trusted God completely. The day came when the baby Moses could no longer be hidden in the house. Why? Scripture does not say. But there were bound to be periodic patrols down the streets to keep the slaves under control. This always happens when any people are being kept in subjection. There also must have been periodic house-to-house searches, just to make sure no newborn children were being hidden.

Babies cry; thus there was great danger that Moses' crying might be heard by a patrolling guard or that he might be discovered by some guard searching their family's house. There was even the possibility that some neighbour, hoping to receive a reward or to be favoured by the Egyptians, could snitch on the child.

The day came when Moses could no longer be hidden. His mother had to do something. What could she do to save her child? She had to be wise — work out the wisest plan she could — and she had to trust God, completely trust Him to use her plan and save her child. This she did.

=> She made a watertight ark-like basket (v. 3).

=> She put Moses in the basket and placed the basket among the reeds of the Nile River. No doubt, she knew right where Pharaoh's daughter (and probably other Egyptian officials) bathed and swam. She knew that Moses could be saved from the king's death threat only if some Egyptian official could find him, have compassion and keep the child as his or her own. Thus when she placed the ark-like basket in the Nile River, she was trusting God to cause some Egyptian authority to find the baby and save him (v. 3).

=> She then had the oldest child, Miriam, stand some distance away, keeping watch over the child (v. 4).

The point to see is the great wisdom and faith of Moses' mother. She did all she could and she trusted God, trusted Him to use her efforts and bless them. She laid the best plans she could and carried them out. And in the midst of her plans, she trusted God to work everything out: to save her child. The faith of Moses' mother was so great that she is listed in *The Great Hall of Faith* in Hebrews:

*Heb 11:23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*

**Thought 1.** Great wisdom and great faith are two qualities needed by us all. Situations beyond our control will someday arise, situations such as...

- oppression      • accident      • hunger and thirst      • failure
- loss              • death              • loneliness              • temptation
- sickness        • bankruptcy      • emptiness              • sin

(1) When situations beyond our control strike us, we need to lay the wisest plans we can and carry them on.

**Rom 8:28** *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.*

**Phil 2:12** *Continue to work out your salvation [deliverance] with fear and trembling.*

**James 1:5** *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

(2) When situations beyond our control strike us, we need to trust God, trust Him completely, trust Him to work the situation out for us.

**Psa 34:22** *The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.*

**Psa 37:3** *Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

**Psa 37:5** *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.*

**Psa 118:8** *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.*

**Psa 125:1** *Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.*

**Prov 3:5-6** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

**Isa 26:3-4** *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.*

**Thought 2.** How many questions and what kinds of questions flooded the tender heart of Moses' mother? One can only imagine the things that could have entered her mind. Questions like:

=> "God, why did our precious baby have to be a boy?"

=> "Why did our family have to live in such a dangerous place like Egypt?"

=> "How did we wind up with such an evil ruler like Pharaoh?"

=> "How long can we keep hiding our baby before someone finds out and reports us?"

=> "What can I do to save my baby?"

In the safety of the heart, the believer has a sanctuary where the hard questions of life can be asked of God. It is through prayer...

- that God answers our most perplexing questions
- that God meets our deepest needs
- that God shows us what to do

Prayer is where faith grows, where life's impossibilities become God's solutions.

***Psa 13:1-2** How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?*

***Psa 91:15** He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

***Isa 65:24** Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*

***Jer 29:13** You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

***Hab 1:2-3** How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.*

***Hab 3:17-18** Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.*

***Mat 7:7** "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."*

***John 15:7** "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

***John 16:24** "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."*

### EXODUS 02:03 ARK (TEBAH)

*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. **Exodus 02:03***

The Hebrew word used for the small ark-like basket is the same word used for Noah's ark. In fact, these are the only two times that the word is used in the Bible. This fact suggests the following picture or type:

=> The ark was a place of salvation — safety and security — for Moses, just as it was for Noah. (See note, Gen 7:13-16.)

⇒ Christ is the believer's ark, the believer's salvation from judgment, the believer's safety and security.

**Gen 28:15** *"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

**Psa 37:39** *The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.*

**Luke 19:10** *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

**John 3:16-17** *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

**Phil 1:6** *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

**1 Tim 2:5** *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

**2 Tim 1:12** *I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

**Heb 7:25** *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

**1 Pet 1:5** *Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

**Jude 1:24-25** *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever more! Amen. □*

#### **IV. Exodus 02:05–08 Witnessing the Guiding Hand of God**

Moses' mother was a woman who witnessed the sovereign, guiding hand of God. The plan of Moses' mother worked.

⇒ Pharaoh's daughter discovered the ark-like basket (v. 5). She came down to the river and began to bathe. At some point, she noticed the basket floating among the reeds and asked one of her servants to wade in and get it.

⇒ When Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket, the baby immediately began to cry. This touched her heart and she was moved with compassion for the crying child (v. 6).

Note: she knew that the child was a Hebrew baby.



- => At that very moment, Moses' sister demonstrated great courage: she walked up and suggested that Pharaoh's daughter have a Hebrew woman nurse the child for her (v. 7). Would Pharaoh's daughter have kept Moses if Miriam had not made the suggestion to the princess? We cannot know, not for sure, but the compassion she felt combined with Miriam's suggestion stirred her to act.
- => Pharaoh's daughter agreed with the suggestion: she instructed Miriam to go and find a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby boy for her (v. 8). Miriam went and brought her own mother (Moses' mother) to the princess.

The point to see is God's sovereignty — His guiding hand — through this entire event. God's Spirit was hovering all around the small basket and the little baby lying in it. Note how everything worked out for good:

- => The reeds held the basket close to shore and kept it from floating downstream with the current.
- => No crocodile or passing dogs came along to threaten the child.
- => Pharaoh's daughter herself came to bathe, not some other high-ranking official. The very person who was most likely to feel compassion for a small baby came along, the daughter of Pharaoh himself.
- => Pharaoh's daughter glanced in the right direction to see the basket.
- => The baby began to cry at just the right moment, right when Pharaoh's daughter lifted the lid to the basket.
- => The arousal of *deep compassion* — a compassion deep enough to later convince her father, the king, to let her keep the child — was stirred at the very moment needed.
- => Courage was stirred within Moses' sister, who was just a young girl, courage enough to walk up to Pharaoh's daughter and suggest that she keep the baby as her own child.

Moses' mother had prayed and trusted God to save her child and to use him in God's service. And God was doing just that. God was looking after and taking care of the baby. Moses' mother was witnessing the sovereign, guiding hand of God. She was experiencing just how God works all things out for good to those who truly love and follow after Him (Rom 8:28). God is sovereign; God possesses all power. He can do anything.

**Rom 8:28** *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.*

**Mark 10:27** *"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*

**Mark 9:23** *"If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."*

**Mark 11:24** *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

**Mat 21:22** *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

*Luke 1:37* “For nothing is impossible with God.”

*Job 42:2* “I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.”

*Psa 62:11* One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: “Power belongs to you, God.”

*Psa 115:3* Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

*Isa 43:13* “Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?”

### **III. Exodus 02:09–10 Reward for a Mother’s Faith**

Moses’ mother had her faith rewarded. The most that she could have hoped for now happened.

1. She was employed to nurse Moses (v. 9). When Miriam brought her mother to Pharaoh’s daughter, the princess hired her to look after Moses. Note that Moses’ mother was even paid wages to care for her child. It was during the early years of Moses’ life, sitting at the knee of his mother and father, that he was most likely taught to trust God and to believe the great promises of God to Israel. No doubt, having been his nurse, she was allowed to maintain a relationship with him throughout his years in the palace of Pharaoh. She also would have continued to instruct Moses when they were visiting one another. There is a possibility that she was kept in the palace serving Pharaoh’s daughter throughout Moses’ years in Egypt.
2. Moses’ mother saw God work all things out for good: her son was not only saved, but he was adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh himself (under God’s sovereign, guiding hand). When Moses reached a certain age, his mother took him to the princess, and Moses became the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.

Note that it was Pharaoh’s daughter who named the child Moses. The name Moses (Moseh) means “I drew him out of the water.” Note how God took the evil plan of Pharaoh, twisted it, and worked it out for good. God caused Pharaoh to give food, shelter and clothing to the very child who was to take the lead in freeing the Israelite slaves, the very thing Pharaoh was trying to prevent.

**Thought 1.** Moses’ mother had her faith rewarded. Our faith will also be rewarded if we will only trust God. God will twist events and work all things out for our good if we will just love Him and follow after Him.

**Rom 8:28** *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.*

**Heb 2:14-15** *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

**2 Sam 22:2** He said: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.”

**Psa 28:7** The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.

**Psa 40:17** Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.

**Psa 91:3** I Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence.

**Isa 41:10** So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

**Jer 1:8** Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

**1 Cor 10:13** No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it..

**2 Tim 4:18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**Heb 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

**2 Pet 2:9** If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. ■