

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

**Sermon: Exodus 1:5-22
SATAN DEALS SHREWDLY,
BUT THE LORD DEALS WELL**

All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already). And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

*Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. **Come, let us deal shrewdly** with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."*

Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah. And he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."

*But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?" And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them." Therefore **God dealt well** with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.*

So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive."

Have you ever had dealings with someone who "deals shrewdly"? – a business owner, a salesman, a contractor, a politician, a neighbor, a relative? About whom is the "shrewd dealer" concerned? You, or himself? Have you ever had dealings with someone who "deals well"? Kind, considerate, flexible. For whom is he concerned? For you, or for self? That is the contrast in our text for this morning. The Devil Deals Shrewdly, concerned about no one's best interest but his own. The Lord Deals Well, concerned about your own best interest.

The Book of Exodus picks up where Genesis left off. Genesis ended with Joseph as 2nd most powerful leader in Egypt. Under the good graces of Pharaoh, he invited his father Jacob and his 11 brothers and families to move to Egypt during the remaining five years of the famine. All moved to Egypt. There were 70 males in the family. Although Pharaoh and all Egypt were happy to have beloved Joseph's family, they did not particularly care for shepherds and livestock workers, and had them keep to themselves. They were given the fertile delta area of Egypt's Nile River, where they were quite isolated. The children of Jacob or "Israel" stayed in Egypt longer than the remaining five years of the seven-year famine. They stayed several hundred years! There they were safe. Their population numbers multiplied. They prospered. They knew this was not their real homeland. Their real homeland was / would be the land of Canaan which God had promised to Jacob's grandfather and Joseph's great-grandfather, Abraham. Before Jacob died 17 years later in Egypt, he asked that his remains be buried in Canaan, the land promised to them. His family buried him there, but returned to Egypt. In another fifty years Joseph died. He had strictly requested that whenever the Lord would lead the Israelites back to Canaan, they should take his bones along, which they in fact did, after a total of 430 years in Egypt!

During this long period of quiet years in Israel's history, the people multiplied in number—a blessing from God. What a blessing to have a nation that is filled with people of faith in God's Son the Savior, a nation filled with Christians—not simply people who are wise, or rich, or healthy, but are Christians.

Satan must have been wondering, what was going on with God's promise about giving the Israelites the land of Canaan. He must have been wondering about God's bigger promise of the Savior to come. Satan wanted to deal shrewdly and interfere.

Perhaps 200 years into Israel's 430 year stay, a new dynasty came to power in Egypt. Indeed governments rise and governments fall throughout the world, none of which happens without the Lord's consent. Later, when the Assyrians came to power and took 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel into exile, Isaiah 10 tells us that the Assyrians thought it was by their mighty power that they had done this. The Lord made it clear that He had allowed them to do this, as His way of reprimanding Israel. Then much later, at the birth of the Savior, the Bible says, "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). God directed world affairs so that under the Roman Empire the time was just right for the Savior to be born. The history of the world is ever in God's hands, as He deals well with those who trust in Him, leading them to trust Him more! The chaos of national and international events today, whether orchestrated by Satan, are all being directed by the Lord for the benefit of His people, His children, His family, His Kingdom, those who have faith in Jesus for their forgiveness and salvation.

The new pharaoh of Egypt was afraid of the Israelites, afraid they might join an attacking enemy and take over. So he, and Satan behind him, began to plot how to deal shrewdly with these people of God, so as to break them. "What can we do with these people, so as to serve ourselves better?" Plan A was to work them hard to reduce their numbers and their strength. They were already a submissive people, but there needed to be less of them. Plan A did not work. God, with a smile shall we say, blessed His people even more! Imagine all those big strong boys, men, building pharaoh's store cities Pithom and Raamses, with more and more workers coming up the ranks! Pharaoh dreaded them even more. Plan B—make them work with rigor and bitterness. Take all the fun out of their work by pushing them to and beyond the limits. To no avail.

When cleverness didn't work Pharaoh got rough—that's the devil's way. Plan C—have the Israelite midwives, those who assisted with the births of the babies, kill all the newborn boys and keep the girls alive. Simple solution--reduce the physical prowess of Israel by killing the baby boys at birth. Pharaoh knew better than to kill 100,000 or 200,000 grown men, but the helpless babies, much easier. And make the Hebrew midwives do it!

Does it sound similar to abortion today—get rid of the helpless babies? Our "pharaoh," our government, doesn't mandate abortion, but it certainly isn't forbidding it. When babies, which God has given, are growing in mother's womb, babes that the parents, the mothers, don't want, let the parents and doctors/midwives deal shrewdly with them. Forget about what suits the child, but what suits the adults. Therefore, abort, kill, the baby before it's born. Don't let the birth of a child, hinder someone's godless and immoral life, or hinder one's self-centered budget, or one's self-centered career. Excuse it any way you want: A.) The child won't be loved. So kill it now. But how loving is that? B.) There won't be enough income for another baby. So get rid of it. But the Lord feeds the birds every day. He fed a gathering of 5000 from 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish. Will He not much more feed you? C.) Or salve your conscience with the idea, as long as the "fetus" wasn't developed enough to live on its own, it's not like killing a real person. Really? Can a one-year old survive on its own? What is the difference? A baby is a unique God-given human being. Satan deals shrewdly and in horrifying ways.

But the Lord deals well. Two humble midwives dared oppose the Pharaoh of Egypt. Under God they foiled Pharaoh's plan. They opposed the king because they had too much respect and love for the real King, the Lord, whose people they were, who had promised their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the land of Canaan would be theirs and that the Savior who would undo the mess of sin on this earth was coming from their people. "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29) is what the apostles said when the leaders forbid them to preach the risen Jesus. In the midst of all the intimidation, the Lord blessed the midwives and gave them households, families, children of their own. Go forward in life, trusting in the Savior.

Have you offended Him--in matters of abortion--silently or actively? Have you offended with other sins? Forgiveness awaits for you in Jesus. Repent, turn to the Lord for forgiveness. Jesus paid the price for you at Calvary. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," He said from the cross. His merciful arms await.

Pharaoh was forced into plan D. He told his own people to throw any Israelite baby boys into the Nile River. God allowed this for some time, but His plan was still unfolding to crush mighty and ungodly pharaoh and Egypt with the 10 plagues and to destroy their army at the Red Sea, to free His people. Israel's sufferings developed an intense longing for their own land and nation, for God's powerful mercy and rescue, for His deliverance in the Savior to come.

So it is with us. Does Satan want the people of God, the believers in Jesus, to enjoy better and better conditions in their country or nation? Has there been a nation in which, over time, Christians did not receive worse rather than better treatment? But the Lord deals well. His goal is your faith in His Son, your forgiveness in His Son, and your eternal life in His Son. Bear up under the harshness that Satan brings in this life. Hang on to Jesus now and especially at death's door. God deals well. Satan deals shrewdly, but God deals well.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach----