



Exodus (Part 8) – God is Able

Matt Chandler – October 16, 2016

[Video]

Female: From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. He draws us out of our sin, our Egypt, and draws us into his presence, into relationship with him.

[End of video]

Well, if you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We'll be in Exodus 4. In fact, we're going to cover that entire chapter in our time together today. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you were here a couple of weeks ago, it will look very similar to that.

We will read through the entire chapter, and then we'll go back, and I will kind of point some things out. I have a singular point today with about 40 proofs. That's kind of our plan. Here is my singular point. Here is the weight, I believe, of Exodus 4. *The omnipotent might of God almost always flows through obedience rooted in faith.*

That's what we're going to see in Exodus 4, that God's omnipotent might, his power, his strength, his ability to be sovereign over all almost always flows through obedience rooted in faith. That's my point. Now let's see if I'm right. Exodus 4. If you remember Exodus 3, God finally speaks. God shows up. **"I AM WHO I AM."** Moses does a lot of listening, not a lot of talking. Then, finally, Moses is going to respond. Exodus 4, starting in verse 1. This is the Word of God.

"Then Moses answered, 'But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it

became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the Lord said to Moses, 'Put out your hand and catch it by the tail.'" Have you ever tried to catch a snake? You probably shouldn't do it by the tail. Don't go, "Well, the Bible said..." Don't catch it by the tail, all right? Bad things happen.

"Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.' Again, the Lord said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.

Then God said, 'Put your hand back inside your cloak.' So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. 'If they will not believe you,' God said, 'or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.'

But Moses said to the Lord, 'Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.' But he said, 'Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.'

Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, 'Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.'

Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, 'Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.' And Jethro said to Moses, 'Go in peace.' And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, 'Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.' So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

And the Lord said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.'" That's going to become really significant next week, okay? ""Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me.' If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.""

At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!' So he let him alone. It was then that she said, 'A bridegroom of blood,' because of the circumcision." I know you're eager for the application of that section. Verse 27:

"The Lord said to Aaron, 'Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.' So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel.

Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Now, if you remember the narrative arc of our story, the last time we really spent some time with Moses, he was kind of brash, highly educated, knew all of the secrets of Egypt, and he had tried to start a rebellion against Egypt to save Israel from Egypt. Now, we have a very different man here. We have a man who is broken, a man who, in his age, now understands his limitations.

In fact, if we went back to chapter 3 (which we really don't have a ton of time to do), in verse 11, Moses talks about his inadequacy, that he's not adequate for this mission that God is trying to give to him. In verse 13 of chapter 3, it talks about his ability. "I don't have the ability to do this." In chapter 4, verse 1, he starts to talk about how ineffective this mission is. "I am not going to be effective. They are not going to believe me." In chapter 4, verse 10, he finally just says, "Look, I'm incompetent. This isn't happening."

This is not the brash, gifted, eager, ferocious Moses we met back in Exodus 2. This is a man in his 80s, all of his ambition dried up, broken, content to just hang with sheep and stay away from people. This is where we find Moses. God, despite all of his protests, has this gentle determination that Moses is his man and that Moses is exactly who he wants for this job.

Now, I want to point out something because we're going to see something here that you're going to see as long as you read your Bible. You let someone preach the Bible to you if they're preaching it right. Here's what I mean by that. What the Lord does is he gives his Word before he reveals his power. As we step into that obedience, his power is revealed. That's what you're seeing.

God has done a lot of talking here, but where do you see his power? You see his power when Moses takes the step. We can see in these... Right? You have, "Throw your staff on the ground." He throws his staff on the ground. It turns into a snake. "Reach down and grab the snake by the tail." You don't do that ever. Here's what we know. It's conjecture, but this is not a friendly snake. You might be thinking, "There are no friendly snakes."

Moses is a shepherd and has been a shepherd for 40 years, and he sees this snake and runs, which means this thing is deadly. He runs, and the Lord goes, "Quit running. Come back. Pick it up by the tail." Now, that's a moment between the Lord and Moses, is it not? "Pick it up by the tail"? What do you do if you're Moses? "Actually, you're supposed to reach by the head. In fact, this kind we don't even mess with. We just get the sheep out of here."

What happens? Moses, rooted in faith, steps forward in obedience and reaches out and grabs the tail. What happens? The power of God. It becomes a staff, and he picks it up. What we're going to see and what God is asking of Moses both in his scene and for the rest of the book of Exodus and for the rest of our lives, here's what the Lord is after. Obedience rooted in faith.

Now, we don't like that. You don't like it. I don't like it. Moses certainly doesn't like it. What happens when the Lord asks us for that... "Take this step. It's risky. It's dangerous. It doesn't make sense, but I have revealed this to you by my Word. I want you now to be obedient to what I have commanded you." We get nervous, so we tend to justify our disobedience, and that's exactly where our man Moses goes.

Look at this in verse 1. **"Then Moses answered, 'But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'"** Now, Moses knew himself. He

knew he was the kind of guy, especially as far as the Hebrews and the Egyptians were concerned, who was not going to be trusted. If you remember his background, he was educated and grew up in kind of Egyptian society, but he was a Hebrew. He was a man without a home.

The Egyptians wouldn't fully own him, and the Hebrews wouldn't fully own him. He's going, "You have the wrong guy. They're not going to believe what I say. I am inadequate. This is inefficient. I lack the ability. They will not believe me." What Moses is guilty of here is something that most of us, from time to time, will struggle with. He is using his past as a justification to not be obedient in the present.

This plays itself out all the time among those who God is wooing toward obedience. "I would do that. I would be obedient, but people know I've done this. People know this is my background." Somehow, we feel as though we have disqualified ourselves from obedience and being used profoundly by God. When I say *profoundly*, I don't mean like leading millions of people out of slavery. I mean faithful presence at home and at work and in your neighborhood.

When I'm talking about profound, I'm talking about faithful presence. I don't think we have a lot of Moseses in here. I think we have a lot of men and women who have been called to be faithful at home, faithful at work, and faithful in their neighborhood, faithful in the church. What does that look like? That looks like obedience rooted in faith. What happens to us?

Since I'm a man, I can use one that I know has happened with a lot of the men I kind of do life with. We really blow it, and then we just stop trying. We snapped at our wife. We weren't what we should have been for our children. We weren't, and then we just go, "Well, if I tried now, they would just think I'm a hypocrite. Look. 'I love you.' 'You're a hypocrite.' Doesn't that feel good?"

I got in a lot of trouble (I say that kind of tongue-in-cheek) a few weeks ago when I said, "Hey, you're just average. Breathe." That's good news. You are. You're average. I love you. This frees us up to just go, "It's not in me. It's in him." I love what the Lord gives him for this. "I can't do it. I'm stuck. You have the wrong guy. They're going to know. They're not going to believe me. This just isn't going to work."

Here's what's great. The Lord never speaks to his low self-esteem. He never does it. He never comes up and goes, "Now, Moses, I don't like you talking about yourself like that. Moses, you know Egyptian. Do you know how few Hebrews know Egyptian? You're one of the smarter men who I've

created." God does nothing to sooth his low self-esteem because the more you focus on your own self-esteem, the lower it will plummet. God gives him what he needs, a picture of God that transcends his low self-esteem.

What the Lord gives Moses in his justification, his delayed obedience, his blatant disobedience to the Lord, is he gives him three signs. He gives him the sign of the snake. He gives him the sign of the leprosy being cleansed. And he gives him the sign of the Nile being turned into blood. Now, here is a good way to think about signs. Signs aren't parlor tricks.

They're not the Lord trying to do magic to make the crowd go, "Whoa!" That's not what he's doing. When there are signs, he is communicating to the world around us something of himself. In these three signs, he wants to teach Moses something, the Hebrews something, and the Egyptians something. The signs are significant, so let's look at them again. Look at verse 2.

"The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the Lord said to Moses, 'Put out your hand and catch it by the tail'—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

Now let me tell you what is significant about this. On Pharaoh's crown, the crown that Pharaoh would wear, there was a hooded cobra that was opened, facing out toward the enemies of Egypt. The uraeus, the cobra that is being represented here, was a sign of Egyptian power and sovereign rule, so that the Egyptians believed and the Hebrews would have been taught that when the Pharaoh puts on that crown with the cobra unfurled on his head, he became a type of living god, in fact, the most powerful god in all of Egypt.

God, for Moses who ran from this power and for the people of Israel who have been subjected by this power and for the ones who held the power (there was no real power at all, other than the sovereign sway of God almighty), God says, "Let me show you what I think of the snake. Grab it by the tail." What is being communicated here? "I'm not afraid of your power. You can't kill us. It's no real power at all. Touch it by the tail. It becomes a staff."

It's important to note this because this is the thrust of what we're doing. This sign of what will come, what has not come yet but what will come, the power of God is flowing through the channel of Moses's obedience, which is rooted in faith that God is the, "I am who I am." Then it moves on not just from the snake but now into leprosy. Let's look at verse 6.

"Again, the Lord said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. Then God said, 'Put your hand back inside your cloak.' So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh."

Now, leprosy in this period of human history is the great scourge of humankind. We had no answers for leprosy. What we find in some ancient writing is that Egypt had thrown some of its wealth and some of its brightest minds on being able to conquer this highly contagious disease that was kind of ravaging the ancient world to no avail.

Once again, God says, "Hey, you know what Egypt has been unable to do? With all of their wisdom, with all of their gold, do you know what they have been unable to do? Mo, put your hand inside your cloak. Pull it out." That's a death sentence. That's advanced. That's stage four. His hand was white with leprosy. I'm guessing that's just going to be a little moment of panic. "Okay, put your hand back in your cloak." What Egypt could not do, the Lord did in seconds.

I think again I just want to keep pointing this out. Moses, with all of his inadequacies, with his fears and with his history of failures, will overcome this dreaded disease by the power of God flowing through the channel of obedience built on faith. Lastly, the Nile. Let's look now at verse 9. **"If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."**

Now, let's do just a little lesson on the Nile. Every year, at the high water point of the Nile, the Nile brings 30 feet of black soil into the Nile basin. Think about that. That is 30 feet of black soil in the middle of the desert. The wealth and power of Egypt laid in the Nile's ability to create soil that produced crops, that brought in fish and water fowl. Almost all of the power of Egypt was built around the Nile.

In fact, in the ancient world, they were synonymous. If you travelled internationally, and you asked friendly people, people who were friendly toward the States, "Give me one word to describe the United States," they're going to say, "Freedom." Right? "Tell me about America." "The home of the free." In this day, "Tell me about Egypt." "Home of the Nile." It would just be synonymous. Egypt is the Nile, and the Nile is Egypt. In fact, they continually sang and worshipped the Nile.

They called the Nile the father of life, the mother of all, the divine spirit that blessed the land unceasingly. To them, the Nile made Egypt Egypt. God said, "If they won't listen to the first sign, here's what you do. You take a cup..." Think about the kind of faith this is going to require. You're standing in front of Pharaoh. This guy can kill you. You're standing in front of the elders of Israel who do not know who you are. This is a little gutsy call.

Get your cup. Fill it up with the Nile. "Are you guys ready?" What happens if it's just water? "You guys think about that, huh. Are you ready to go now?" This is what the Lord has asked him to do. He's not turning the water into blood in the cup. "Pour it out, and it will be blood." No, no, no. Obedience by faith. "Pour it out. It will turn to blood on the ground."

It says that once again, Moses, with all of his inadequacies, with his stunning history of failure... He has not lived up to his education. He has not lived up to his potential. He has failed over and over again. He has made foolish choice after foolish choice after foolish choice. He will be used profoundly by God to overthrow the most powerful force in human history at that point via obedience rooted in faith.

I want to talk about this just for a second. I'll tell you why. I think some of the things I have to say today are hard things, but I need to say them for our good and for my own conscience before the Lord. When you think about your relationship with God and Jesus, when you think about that, is your life marked by obedience rooted in faith? You need to answer that. That is such a serious question that I wouldn't make any joke around it.

Is your life marked by obedience rooted in faith? I'm not asking if you're perfect. I'm not asking if you don't struggle. I know we struggle. I know no one in here has perfect obedience. But I am asking if your relationship is marked by the desire for and baby steps in obedience marked by faith that God is who he says he is. I'll tell you why this is such a huge question.

I was asked to speak at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's national conference, and they wanted me to study and then present on what it's like in the Bible Belt. Here is where I'm really afraid for you. I'm willing to say to you something you might never want to hear again and never come back because I'm about to say this. In the Bible Belt, churches are jam filled with people who have no mark of being Christians on their lives other than the fact that they attend once a week.

No obedience whatsoever. No desire for obedience. No relationship with Christ. No seriousness about God. This is it. You come. You check. You'll call yourself a Christian. I want to lovingly tell you that if there is no desire for obedience and no obedience, you should not count yourself a Christian. You should consider yourself lost and in danger of damnation.

I know you might be going, "Oh, that seems a little strong." How cruel would it be for me to pamper your religiosity when damnation is at stake? You can go somewhere else, and they'll talk to you about how awesome you are, but I need, compelled by the Scripture, to tell you that you're playing a dangerous, dangerous, dangerous game when you come and sit and listen to the things we say and take no active steps of obedience. You're hardening your heart against the King of Glory.

What pleases God is obedience rooted in faith, not perfect obedience, because we can't do that. That's the point of Christ and the cross. We're not going to be perfect, but we will stumble forward. If you're not even trying to stumble forward, stop it. You're not a Christian. I know you got baptized when you were 7 and were in RAs, and your parents are Christians, and you're from Texas. None of that makes you a Christian. I'm asking you because heaven and hell is hinging on this question. Is your life marked by obedience rooted in faith?

Where are those steps of obedience that you're taking? If you don't have any... Listen, I'm not just talking about being good people or being a moral conservative. That's not what we're talking about here. Your external morality isn't even what I'm addressing. Do you have a heart that is after the Lord? You want to please him. You want to take those steps of obedience as the Word of God comes to you.

Here's where we are, where Moses is. He's standing on this ground, and the Word of God is coming to Moses. "Drop your staff. Reach out your hand. Put your hand in your cloak. Take a cup of water from the Nile." Moses does it. The power of God manifests. For you and I, here is the Word of God. The Word of God says, "Walk this way to life." That's why the psalmist says in Psalm 16:11, "You have made known to me the path of life. You fill me with joy in your presence."

Where has he made known to us the path of life? It isn't what we think is life because there is a way that seems right to us, and in the end, it leads to death. No, he has made known to us the path of life via the Word of God. To shrug it off, to decide for yourself, "I am God. I decide what is good. I decide what is right for me," is an affront to the holiness of God.

I'm just trying to plead with you for the sake of your own soul and the sake of the name of Christ that is so belittled by those who would come to church on the weekend and have no other relationship with him, look like the world but put the name of Jesus over top of it, want the same things the world wants but just co-op spiritual language on top of it.

Again, I'm not trying to offend you. I promise I'm not. I know this is offensive, but my heart in it is not to offend but to plead. Listen, guys. This isn't horseshoes. The Lord is not deceived. He doesn't just check in on Sunday mornings and see that you're here and go, "I guess we're great." That's not how this works. Here is what is interesting to note here. God has really flexed for Moses. He really has shown himself to be really mighty.

We see in this text that the Lord of Lords has shown himself to be just that. He is able to transform. He is able to renew. He is able to conquer, so we're good to go, right? I mean, he shows up to Moses, shows all of these powerful signs. In fact, I think we tend to believe, "Man, if God would show me something like that, I would be all in too."

If I woke up, and my dresser was burning, and the Lord began to speak, I think I would be full-on, "Sure, whatever you want." Yet the stubbornness of man's heart knows no boundaries. Look at verse 10. There is such a sad irony in verse 10 and following. **"But Moses said to the Lord, 'Oh, my Lord...'"** Now, I want to stop there. That word *Lord* is not, **"I AM WHO I AM."** Do you remember that?

When God said, **"I AM WHO I AM,"** that is going to translate throughout the rest of the Old Testament as the LORD, in all caps. Moses doesn't use that name here. He uses the word *Adonai*. He says, "Oh my *Adonai*," which translates to Lord, sovereign Master. That's what the *Lord* there means. "You are Lord. You are sovereign. You are my Master. I am your servant."

"But Moses said to the Lord, 'Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.' Then the Lord said to

him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'

But he said, 'Oh, my Lord...'" Again, "Oh, my *Adonai*." "'...please send someone else.' Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, 'Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

Now, here is the sad irony of this text. Moses says, "Oh *Adonai*, oh Sovereign, oh Master, oh Lord, oh powerful one, you can do whatever you want. You can accomplish anything you will. There is nothing that can stay your hand. You are almighty, all-knowing, can do it all." Then Moses makes his own inadequacies trump the power of God. "Send someone else." Do you see the irony in that? "There is nothing that you can't do, yet my foolishness, my brokenness supplants your omnipotence."

I put in my notes here that it is his omnipotence that matters, not our incompetence. It is his power that matters, not our lack of it. It is his might that accomplishes his purposes and will, not ours. This is where you can see the Lord getting really angry with Moses. In fact, the text says it. "His anger was kindled." It's this idea of wood there. All of a sudden it's like, "Well, I don't speak well." *Boom!* Fire lit. It is kind of that thing where you're talking to your dad, and his head turns, and you stop. That's what just happened in this text. His anger was kindled.

Why? You see the Lord kind of hit the ball back to him like this. He's like, "I don't speak well." He's like, "You just called me *Adonai*. Don't I make the mouth? Do you really think your speech is an issue here? Don't I make the mouth? I'm *Adonai*. You got my name right. It would be great if what you believed about my name and how you actually trusted and lived were kind of one."

He's speaking to this fracture in Moses's words and intellectual understanding and willingness to submit his life to what he understands is true about God. If that doesn't apply to us, I don't know

what does. All of us are in some shade of this, right? There isn't anybody in this room who is like, "Well, I'm hoping people are listening today." All of us have some of this. All of us have areas of delayed obedience. If we're just really honest about obedience, there are some things the Lord commands us to that are no problem at all.

Just with a happy heart, we will be fully obedient. Then sometimes, he asks us to take these steps of faith that are terrifying. This might not make sense to the rest of the campuses, but what Carl Brower and his family are doing right now is stepping out of what is known, what is safe, what is secure, and they're stepping into some risk. What is that? That's obedience rooted in faith.

Carl talked to our staff this past week. One of the things he was saying to the staff was that even a year and a half or two years ago, he would have said, "I'm going to grow old here with these men and women. I'm going to sit on the back porch, and we'll talk about all God did with our dumb young days and how he grew us up and how people were patient with us."

What happened? The Lord says, "It's a beautiful vision and dream, but I have something for you over here." He had to wrestle with the Lord, and now he's taking that step of faith. It pleases the Lord. What is happening now in this conversation as the anger of the Lord has been kindled against Moses is the Lord is pushing on Moses to shrink the gap between what he would say to the Lord, "You are *Adonai*, but my weaknesses are more powerful than your power."

The way we talk about that usually here at The Village Church is navel-gazing, when you're always just looking yourself and going, "Well, gosh, surely the Lord can't use me. I mean, look at this. This is gross." Yet, the reason we're always saying... We even wrote a song about it. "Lift your eyes. Look up." Isn't that the way the Lord is addressing Moses's low self-esteem?

Not by going, "Come on, buddy. You can do it." No, no, no. He's saying, "I am able. You're right. You are a terrible speaker. I can't listen to you, but I'll flow through you. I'm able. I'll be the power. Do you think I need your skill set? It's my power that accomplishes my will, not your power. Your role is obedience through faith, and then I'll unleash it."

As we'll see, it usually unleashes differently than we think it's going to, if you remember back to even what we covered week one. God is working a plan. That plan will almost always play out differently than you think. I think you have to make the decision. Is he the Lord of your life, or do you consider him your butler?

Are you in glad submission to the sovereign rule of God, or do you more have the picture that you ring a bell, and he goes and gets you a pillow, brings you a snack? Now, the reason I'm weighing on you today is because this is serious stuff. That takes us to that really strange part of the text. Look back in verse 24. Maybe you were like, "There's no way he's going to touch that." You would be wrong.

Verse 24. Let's look at it. **"At a lodging place on the way [to Egypt] the Lord met him and sought to put him to death."** Now, there's a lot we don't know. We don't know who the Lord is trying to kill here. We know it's either Moses or his firstborn son, but we don't know which one. That's a weird turn. Can we just address that? What just happened? Well, I'm glad you asked. Let's keep going.

"At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!' So he let him alone. It was then that she said, 'A bridegroom of blood,' because of the circumcision."

Now, there is a lot we don't know about this text, but there is plenty that we do know about this text. Again, this is me trying to love us well as a community of faith. What we know is that the sign of the covenant given to Abram when he was given the name Abraham in Genesis 17... If you are in one of our Bible study classes that is walking through Genesis right now...

The women meet on Tuesdays; the men meet on Wednesday mornings. In fact, Carl Brower has actually been teaching that Genesis study for us here at Flower Mound. If you're in one of those classes in Genesis, you're not quite there yet, but you're going to get there. Here is the sign of the covenant that God gives Abraham. Genesis 17:9-11.

"And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.'"

God makes the sign of this covenant relationship. Do you understand covenant? Covenant relationship is what happens in a wedding when the bride and groom turn and face one another and exchange vows. That's covenantal language. We turn and face one another. We say crazy stuff for a wedding day. It's the most romantic day of our lives, and we're saying, "For better or for worse." We're acknowledging, "This could go bad, but it doesn't matter. If it goes better or worse, I'm with you. In sickness and in health." That's covenantal language.

"If everything I love about your vibrancy, energy, and physical ability vanishes tomorrow, I'm not going anywhere. I'm with you. You're with me. Rich or poor. If we're sharing a yacht or sharing a Dr. Thunder, I'm doing it with you." This is covenantal language. We turn and face one another. There is never contractual language at a wedding. It's all covenantal. We're entering into a covenant. What's the sign of the covenant of marriage? It's the exchange of those vows. It's wedding rings. We have these signs of the covenant.

What is the sign of the covenant between God and his people? Circumcision, the shedding of blood, because God is serious about us knowing the weight of sin, the cost of sin. It's a very sensitive part of the body, and some blood to help his people understand the weight of sin and the beauty of his forgiveness. Here's why I'm pressing today. Here's why I'm a little amped up. God just showed up to kill either Moses or his firstborn son. The line that God has drawn is stark.

In the covenant, there is life and forgiveness. Outside of the covenant, there is judgment and death for everyone. Moses has chosen to raise his son outside of the covenant. He is raising a son either as a Midian or an Egyptian, and the Lord has shown up to kill outside of the covenant. What happens? Zipporah knows exactly what it is. Did you see how fast she worked? The Lord has shown up to kill. So she takes care of the problem.

In that moment, here's where I want you to feel the weight. I think so many of us want to castrate the Lion of Judah and pull his teeth out. God doesn't play around with sin. God doesn't play around outside the covenant. Inside the covenant, life, forgiveness, fullness of life. Outside of the covenant, judgment and death, even for Moses and Moses' firstborn son.

That's why I'm pressing you this morning to not play a game. I say all the time that church is just the lamest hobby in the world. I don't know what in the world you're doing if this is the extent of it for you. You have not tricked God. You are not walking in the joy of what it means to be a believer. I

don't know what you're doing. Get a boat. Get out on the lake. I don't know if you're trying to calm your own conscience.

There is a marked joy when we follow the Lord and walk in obedience. We get to see the power of God in our lives. You share the gospel with someone, and they become a believer. That is stunning because you can't save anybody. God just kind of used you. You serve. The happiest people I know are those who are wrung out in glad service to God via the body or other places they might serve.

The most miserable people I know are all about themselves. I'm trying to tell you that the more you're into you, the more miserable of a human being you're going to be. If you're thinking, "Oh my gosh. I don't know what to do with this circumcision thing," let me just bring Jesus into it to calm you down.

Colossians 2:11-12 says, "In [Jesus] **also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ...**" So now the shed blood of Christ becomes our circumcision. "**...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.**"

If you were here last weekend, we did celebration services, and people got in our baptisteries. More than likely, you heard, "Buried with Christ in his death and raised to walk in the newness of life. This is what we're talking about. The sign of the covenant in our day is baptism. We are baptized as a public profession. Everyone who you saw get baptized said this in a community of faith. "I'm following Jesus. I'm in. Hold me accountable. Encourage me. Speak life into me. I am with you in the mission of God to the ends of the earth. Pray for me."

Like a wedding, they got in the water and testified, "I'm with him. Therefore, I'm with you. Let's go, church." Circumcised or uncircumcised in the physical body is no longer a sign of the covenant. Christ's shed blood covers that. Our sign of covenant is belief and baptism. Two questions to conclude our time together. The first is this, and I want to just ask it. If you think about your heart and your life right now, think about how you relate to God, what it looks like...

When you say you're a Christian, what do you mean by that? What does that look like? I want to just ask, are you inside of the covenant where there is forgiveness and life, or are you outside of the covenant where there is death and judgment? Maybe you're in that space where you're like, "Gosh,

I'm not sure." Listen. I don't ever want you to leave here with legalistic leanings or some sort of checklist to check off.

I just want to ask you a simple question. Is your relationship with God marked by a desire for obedience, a desire to know and follow him? As imperfect as that is, if it's there, then I think you should have some confidence that you belong to the Lord. At the same time, if there is nothing but this right here, I don't think you're a Christian.

If there is nothing but, "I come to church on the weekend once, and no other area of my life... My marriage, how I spend my money, how I interact with people, how other people know me... None of that would provide any objective evidence that I'm actually a Christian. I'm just a moral conservative who has grown up in the South, whose parents made me go to church every weekend when I was growing up, any time the doors were open, but I don't have any real relationship with Jesus Christ," I would just not count myself a Christian and be anxious.

There is a good kind of anxiety about the state of our souls. That's the first question. Are you in the covenant or are you outside of the covenant? The second thing I want to ask is if you are a Christian, what are those areas of your life where there is either disobedience or delayed obedience? Where is it that you clearly know what the Lord has asked of you, and it is just one of those seasons that for whatever reason, you're like, "Gosh, if I take that step, there are these ramifications. If I do what the Lord has asked of me, I'll be seen as this. If I take this..."

Here is one of the more sad ironies of the Christians I know. They really want the power of God in their lives and really don't want to be obedient to get it. "I would really love to see my neighbors and coworkers love Christ and surrender to him and be transformed. They're walking in such darkness."

"Well, you'll have to tell them about Jesus."

"Oh, man. I couldn't do that. My past kind of... If you knew what they know about me, you would probably throw me in discipline or something. You don't want any of that."

What has happened there? Well, your past is now defining your present, and you're walking in disobedience while being hungry to see the power of God. I think the most consistent places that we see this play out is evangelism, giving... Nobody sweat. We're not passing a plate. Do you know what

Jesus says? "Do you want to know what is going on in your heart? Look at your checkbook." I don't even think we have checkbooks anymore. "Look at your budget." Oh, most of us don't have budgets. "Look at how you spend your money."

If you want to know what you really worship, what you really value, what really drives your life, look at how you spend your money. That's what Jesus said. He didn't take an offering after that sermon. The third thing is around service. God help us. We live in a part of the world that says, "It's all about us, so churches should be all about us."

They should be catering to us. They should be fully staffed with volunteers. We shouldn't have to do that. Other people should have to do that for us." These are three areas that I think we see all the time, where we want the power of God, we want to see God work and do mighty things, as long as we don't have to do anything. God says, "No, no, no. Grab the tail."

"Well, you know, if I grab the tail, I could get bitten on the hand."

"Maybe you won't get bitten on the hand. You're right. Maybe you will, but maybe you won't. Why don't you reach out your hand and grab it, and let's see?"

"Oh, man. I'm looking at this cup, Lord, and it's still water."

"Mm-hmm, because I'm going to turn it to blood as it hits the ground, so pour it out."

"Everyone is watching. I'm going to look like a real idiot if I pour this out and it's just water on the ground. I have this speech just playing in my head. 'Follow me now.' If it just ends up being water on the ground, I'm going to end up looking like a fool."

"Yeah, maybe. Or maybe your trust in me and faith will lead you to see my power in your day."

There is a joy and gladness to be found in radical submission to the lordship of Christ, and there is a dry, crusty, externally religious, boring way to do this where you defame the name of Christ and know just enough about the joy of Christ to be miserable. I'm pleading with you today to consider where your heart is. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your mercy. Thank you that you have given us your Word. Thank you that you have called us into obedience rooted in faith. I pray now that you would give us clarity on our hearts, clarity on where we stand with regard to the covenant. Are we in? Are we out? We thank you for how your grace covers our imperfect execution of obedience.

We also praise you that that does not take away from your seriousness about sin, your divine hatred for it, and your plan ultimately to either discipline or judge it out of existence. We cry out to you, *Adonai*. Help us live like we believe it. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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