

Exodus 6:14-30

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[0 : 00] Well, concerning genealogies, one thing is certain. We have an immediate disconnect with them if they are not our own.

The only time one appears to love a genealogy is if they've found themselves in a long-term Bible reading plan and were behind a few days and came across one.

We skip over it as that which is boring, inconsequential, and an opportunity to move along.

In fact, this experience of dealing with someone else's genealogy can be most profitably brought home by way of illustration. Imagine you came to my house for dinner.

You said, what have you been doing lately? I said, oh, I've been looking into the Helm family line. Really, you say. Oh, yes, it's fascinating.

[1 : 07] I've got us traced back all the way now to the 14th century. I'd be glad to tell you about it after dinner. Great, you say. Hoping all along that by the time dessert comes and goes, it will have left my mind or at least enabled you to slide out before I corralled you around my big framed portrait of the family tree.

Well, welcome to the home of Israel. You're in their hallway. One thing is certain.

They seem to decorate their walls with genealogies. They're prevalent all the way from the early chapters in Genesis, whether it be chapter 4 or 5 or 10 or what we have here or later genealogies on David's line and just all sorts of them.

Just take a look at Chronicles and they'll fly at you at abundance. What do we do with it? Here it is.

We're learning about the family of Israel. We're in their hallway. And here is a framed, well-matted, hanging piece of art with a family tree right in the middle asking for our attention.

[2 : 38] I want to make three observations about this particular portion of God's Word. First, I want you to take a look at the frame. The frame, of course, is what the genealogy is set within.

On the front side, you'll notice in chapter 6 and verse 12, these words. But Moses said to the Lord, Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me.

How then shall Pharaoh listen to me? For I am of uncircumcised lips. Tracing around the frame, though, on the other side of the genealogy, our own reading today, closed with verse 30.

But Moses said to the Lord, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me? Our text is framed by this self-referential phrase.

It intentionally hangs between Moses' statements about being a man of uncircumcised lips.

[3 : 48] Perhaps that will help us understand the purpose. Perhaps this inclusio is meant for our initial intention.

It would raise a few questions. What does Moses mean by uncircumcised lips? Does the frame on this genealogy come to us merely as a statement about a speech impediment?

Something physical. Certainly back in Exodus chapter 3, when we saw the call going forth to Moses, he described himself as being heavy-tongued, of one who did not speak well.

Perhaps he had a stammer, a lisp, an inability to reach for words. Perhaps just when it came to public speaking, he was fine until he stood up.

When it says that he has uncircumcised lips, is this what he means? That there is a speech impediment of sorts. Something physical.

[5 : 08] Indeed, when God speaks of Aaron attending him back in chapter 4, he gives them to him because he spoke well. Or maybe easily or fluently or much the way Pastor Jackson does.

But maybe it wasn't a speech impediment. Are we to read into this phrase, this frame, something more? Is it a spiritual defect that Moses felt concerning himself?

If you're familiar with the Scriptures, you might be aware of a much later prophet by the name of Isaiah, Isaiah, who when he was asked to go and represent the Word of God to the people, he said, Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips.

That spiritually, it would be almost absurd for the very Word of God to come forth from me, a sinner. I'm undone. Is this what Moses is framing this genealogy in?

Not a speech impediment, but a spiritual defect concerning Moses' own self-referential understanding. Or, perhaps it's here to demonstrate his lack of any persuasive effect.

[6 : 30] Well, let's look at these three, just briefly. In all likelihood, Moses did possess something like a speech impediment or difficulty.

And, in all likelihood, Moses did sense that he was not worthy to be carrying God's words in his mouth.

Put it simply, he knew who he was. In one sense, he might have asked, Who am I to say what God says and to do what God does?

That said, and now coming back to this particular genealogy set in this frame, the immediate context of the words, take a look at it, comes on the heels of Israel's inability to listen to Moses.

Verse 9 of chapter 6, Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen. It also comes on the heels of his flat-out rejection of anything he had to say to Pharaoh.

[7 : 42] So, the people of God were unable to listen to his words. Pharaoh is an outright mockery of his words, the rejection of his words.

Perhaps being of uncircumcised lips is a perfect way of highlighting Moses' dejection at the fact that his words, in and of themselves, were not effectual.

He spoke, nothing changed. Well, nothing changed for the better. His words were weak. His words were without persuasive effect.

The words that came forth from his lips simply did not get the job done. Think of it in regard to the season we're entering into on the political landscape.

We are going to hear a number of words from future leaders, but for many of them, they will be, as they should be, completely ineffectual. I think of Jeremiah 6, where an uncircumcised ear is meant to convey the idea of not being able to hear.

[8 : 56] I think of Leviticus 25, where an uncircumcised heart is not being able to understand. Moses had a physical deficiency, to be sure, but one that he was convinced had a persuasive downside.

His word could not win the day. His own instrument had no influence. He had irrefutable evidence by this point in the text that the sound of his voice did not sway Pharaoh, did not sway the people of Israel.

a man of uncircumcised lips, by way of the frame. A genealogy answering the bell for a man whose words were incapable of saving.

It makes me think of James Gilmore, a man from Scotland, at the age of 27, in 1870, who set out for Mongolia in an effort to win Mongolian, Chinese-speaking Buddhists to the ways of Jesus.

Late in life, and these words must have been written in blood, he pens this in his diary. In the shape of converts, I have seen no results.

[10 : 28] I have not, as far as I am aware, seen anyone who even wanted to be a Christian. Now that's some ineffectual word. And a far cry from the ones he penned when he arrived in Mongolia.

For then, in his diary, he had written several huts in sight. When shall I be able to speak to the people? Oh Lord, suggest by the Spirit how I should come along them and guide me.

But the irrefutable evidence of James Gilmore was that his word had no effect. To think of Gilmore is to remember Moses.

Called by God, sent by God, and at this point in the text, painfully aware that the word of his lips in and of itself has no power to save.

Such is the frame. To this reality then, a genealogy enters in. Have you ever looked at a frame?

[11 : 40] A lot of times they'll draw your eye from the outside and then they'll have this beautiful matting. Move from the frame, by way of illustration, to the matting.

What can we learn from the matting here concerning the meaning? If the frame is Moses' uncircumcised lips, verse 12 and 30, the matting is the tribe of Levi.

Did you notice the genealogy is surrounded by Levi? Verse 16, these are the names of the sons of Levi.

And it's Levi then who carries you all the way down to verse 25. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans.

Now what we've learned then from the matting is it's not just a genealogy of the twelve sons of Israel, even though that's what we expected when we began reading. Because it opened with, these are the heads of their fathers' houses.

[12 : 48] The sons of Reuben. Well, he was the firstborn. And then it moved on to the sons of Simeon. He was the secondborn. And then it picked up Levi and he was the thirdborn.

And if you weren't carefully paying attention to the matting, you might have thought you were just seeing another genealogy as it was read this morning that traveled all the sons of Israel.

But not so. It's moving to Levi and it ends with Levi. What does this mean?

It seems to me that the reason for the genealogy is to place your attention on the third son and his lineage who was the son that held the priesthood within the family of God.

The one son who did not receive an inheritance of particular land for indeed he was dispersed amongst in a democratized way among all the people to mediate the relationship between God and his people.

[14 : 00] Levi is the head of the priesthood. It's the Levitical line. That's the genealogy I'm looking at here.

And for the first readers they would have known much more quickly than we that we are now reading of the one through whom blood atones.

That the word is given through Moses but the blood is essential in saving God's people. Now just think of it.

When Moses leaves the scene he's kind of like a one man band. He's an Andy Griffith and Mary Poppins. He's got all the instruments on him and as long as he's living lots of stuff is going. But when Moses goes you don't hear much about his family or his children.

But Aaron and particularly the Levites they emerge with largeness on the screen. in fact if these original readers and getting a hold of them is a little difficult at times with Exodus whether they were really early readers thinking about walking into the promised land or those generations in the promised land they would have known that these were the ones they follow.

[15 : 21] You follow the Levites. Indeed it was the Levites who put their foot in the water of the Jordan through which it stopped and they entered into the land. By the time the readers came in the land they were the leaders of the ones who all God's people were to follow.

A genealogy framed by a man who's aware that his word is ineffectual. Matted by the attending need of one who will mediate through blood.

And look at the emphasis right there in the middle. I mean this is the branch. It's not a tree of twelve branches and sons and following them all out. It's a tree that really is concerned with one Levite and through five succeeding generations all the way to Phineas traces him out.

So the genealogy by intention is focusing you on the transference between Levi to Kohath and Kohath to Amram and Amram to the emphasis on Aaron and Moses and then after Aaron and Moses Eleazar and after Eleazar Phineas two on either side of Aaron all within the frame of Levi.

Levi. I find that interesting that at this very early juncture in the biblical record there are now two distinct players that emerge on the scene for the salvation of God's people.

[16 : 58] Moses through whom God's word will come and through whom the prophetic office will arrive and Aaron to whom the priestly dimension is given and the blood through which God's people find mediation.

Already working here. Now if you're a reader of the Old Testament you might be aware of a book like Zechariah and you might remember that there are these little hints even in this ancient record that someday this prophetic word role will be joined to this priestly role almost as if by way of one person holding both offices all of which don't really come to fruition until the New Testament record brings us the word of God through whom his blood shed mediates relationship that is strong enough to save.

Well what is the implication for us? Having seen the frame having drawn into the matting having looked at the point of emphasis what does the text have to say?

Notice verse 26 it's unmistakable these are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt. Notice the next verse it was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt and notice by way of repetition so the reader would not forget it this Moses and this Aaron the irony of course is that the first readers would have been aware that this Moses was tested by God's people and rejected as God's leader by part and parcel an entire generation this Moses was the one who the people continued to disbelieve and this Aaron who along with Miriam under the rebellion of Korah and the great

Levite families were told hey who put you guys in charge it is this Moses who actually leads the people astray later in the book that kind of a priesthood that would offer a golden cap and it is this Aaron to whom the people will actually rebel and say we don't need anything of it it is this Moses and this Aaron who are ultimately rejected who are the ones through whom God brought salvation even Saul himself later in the line will try to extinguish the entire priestly line because he will not have any mediate his relationship with God who would test his own authority in the world so let me put it this way as we begin to wind up it was these two these rejected men of Israel this one whose word was uncircumcised by that I mean insufficient and this one whose sacrifice in the course of the life of the people was neglected and deemed at various times as unnecessary it is this insufficient word in this unnecessary office which

[20 : 37] God actually used to save his people clearly that's the way the new testament takes the record 23 times Luke 7 I'm sorry Acts 7 Stephen sermon references material from Exodus 1 to 6 23 times by way of quotation or illusion when the apostolic record grabs our material it is doing so with the intention in Stephen's sermon it's really important for you to see it because when he grabs hold of this Moses and this Aaron take a look at what he does verse 34

I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their groaning and I've come down to deliver them and now come I will send you to Egypt this Moses whom they rejected saying who made you a ruler and a judge this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush this man led them out performing wonders and signs in Egypt at the Red Sea and in the wilderness of 40 years this is the Moses who said to the Israelites God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers this is the one who in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel spoke to them verse 37 or 8 or 9 our fathers refused to obey him but thrust him aside in their hearts they turn to Egypt saying to Aaron make us other gods and what does Stephen have to say about them in verse 51 you stiff necked people uncircumcised in heart and ears you always resist the

Holy Spirit as your fathers did so do you and so I ask you this morning stopping in the hallway of the house of Israel to pause over a framed family tree will you receive the salvation that God offers you in Christ even though it comes from a word that by all appearances is ineffectual and is tied to a blood sacrifice which is found to be by most appalling will you come into the family portrait of the family of God through Christ it's as simple as that or will you like Israel reject this line don't reject this Jesus the very word of God whose very blood is necessary for salvation now let me make a comment here on genealogies because the

Old Testament has a lot of them but when you come to the New Testament you get two Matthew 1 and in Luke and both relate or carry the line forward to Jesus and after that guess what genealogies go away from the pages of scripture because having arrived at Jesus there is a general admission ticket available for any to come in there is no there is no special pricing for a few there is no blood line to which you appeal this is the great democratization of the family of God that you can enter from where you are and it is the great evil in the world in which we live that will continue to divide according to bloodline or ethnicity or family tree for all genealogies have been done away with in the fulfillment of our

Lord Jesus Christ so that when you get to that great apocalyptic vision of John in 21 and he begins to define the family and he hangs for you a portrait on the wall the framing are these twelve gates of Jerusalem and the heads of all the families and then he throws forth twelve stones all precious who make up the body of Christ the third of which if you bring it to Levi is agate and I don't know if you like agate or not that's the genealogy we've got today in Exodus you can all participate in the family of God I pray that this text as strange as it sounds this text would lead to the salvation of some who are sitting here today you say why am I a Christian I'm a Christian because I went to a church where they read a list of names and in doing so the spirit of the living

[26 : 02] God took this ineffectual word and impressed upon me that all of this record is leading to the Lord Jesus Christ and then I can enter in and I can have my name written in the family book of life I can be on the wall I can be mounted and I can be directly accessed to Jesus son of David son of Abraham through the word of God whose blood was shed oh oh may you come to Christ today if that happens tell me about it conversion for some secondly correction for others what a wonderful corrective here for those who are longing to follow the teachings of the rock stars of our present day the reality is God has always used weak instruments whose word in and of themselves is completely insufficient and he has always used conflicted and even compromised!

vessels through whom his work goes forth and yet we continue to want an externally effectual persuasive man to lead the way as you look at your pastors today or the kind of church you want to attend in this world this should be the emphasis it was in one sense this David this this Arthur these ordinary men of uncircumcised tongues that God has used to help you walk into his family conversion for some correction for others a calling for a few preaching always appears to be ineffectual just ask a preacher

Paul the great apostle felt the same way and indicated that he did not come with words of wisdom but through the foolishness of a word the word of the cross and the blood of Christ so that the salvation of those who heard him would rest not upon human wisdom but on the power of God I would like to say that there may be even some here who would be called by God as a result of this text to be an instrument of such glorious ineffectiveness that the church might be built upon your own proclamation like Paul I could stand here today and appeal to you on the basis of some genealogy I can take you right back to the Mayflower and tell you how

I arrived I could take you back to relatives of Winston Churchill if I was thinking about family lines that would increase external stature what a waste it would all be truth be told the only genealogy I need is a direct relationship to Jesus through faith that his word is God's word his blood stands for my blood his death pays for my death his life grants me life hang that on the wall and gather your family around it our heavenly father we come to you today on father's day amazed that you would be our father that we would be of your family in a day in which people continue to divide based on blood line may you make us strong with full democratized sonship directly related to all that is life sustain us as we live for you in it in

Jesus name family