

# Resistance & Obedience

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning, church. Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 4. As you're turning there, before we delve into the Scripture this morning, let me also point out an announcement that's in the middle of your bulletin. It says, two services pilot plan.

Easter Sunday is in six weeks on April 1st, and beginning on Easter Sunday and going through the middle of May, we will have not one but two morning services each Sunday. You might ask, why are we doing this? Well, as you may have noticed, our church building continues to get fuller and fuller, which is a good problem. So we rejoice that the Lord continues to bring people to our church, and we want to make space for more people to come and hear God's Word and know the Lord Jesus Christ and be part of our church community. How will it work? Practically, there's a little diagram that sort of talks about our current routine with Sunday school at 9, church at 10, and coffee time at 11.30. It's going to switch. So we'll have 9 o'clock will be the first service, and 11 o'clock will be the second service, and coffee time will be in the middle, down in the fellowship hall. There will be children's church, just like there is during this service, during the 9 o'clock service for children through grade 3. And then the Sunday school classes that we now have from 9 to 9.45 will happen during the second service, starting at 11. And those will be for children and youth and adults. If you're at the congregational meeting, that's a little change.

We will have an adult Sunday school in the second service. So for the summer, we're going to go back to our current routine with one service at 9 and Sunday school, or one service at 10 and Sunday school at 9. And then we're going to evaluate, should we continue this two-service thing into next fall on a more ongoing basis? And if so, what adjustments should we make? So what does this mean for you?

We want you to think about Sundays as a time to worship God and serve God's people. If you're a regular attender here, and if you're not already involved in a ministry team, we would love to have you plug in somewhere. There are lots of places that you can help. Children's ministry, ushers and greeters, coffee hour, AV team, music ministry, rides ministry. There's a place for everyone to serve.

And this is part of living out our calling as the body of Christ. So in two weeks, on March 4th, you'll have an opportunity to sign up so that you can be prepared, if you're not already serving in a Sunday morning ministry, so you can be prepared to serve beginning in April when we go to the two services.

[ 2 : 2 9 ] Having said that, let's go to the book of Exodus. Today we're looking at chapter 3, verses 10, verse 10, until the end of chapter 4. It's a long passage. Two weeks ago, the last time we were in Exodus, Pastor Nick talked about the first half of Exodus 3, where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and he revealed himself as the Lord. And he called Moses by name and called him, and then we come to verse 10, where he calls Moses, commissions Moses. Today what we're going to focus on is Moses' response to God's call. So read with me beginning at chapter 3, verse 10, and we're going to read through the middle of chapter 4 right now. Chapter 3, verse 10, come, God says to Moses, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

But Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? He said, God said, but I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. Then Moses said to God, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, what is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am.

And he said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say this to the people of Israel, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob appeared to me, saying, I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey, and they will listen to your voice. And you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, the Lord, the God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now please let us go a three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. But I know that the king of Egypt won't let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand, so I will stretch out my hand.

And strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it. After that, he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. And when you go, you won't go empty. But each woman shall ask of her neighbor and any woman who lives in her house for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters, so you shall plunder the Egyptians. 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. 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 dry ground. And the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.

[ 6 : 26 ] But Moses said to the Lord, O 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 to speak. But he said, O 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.

I fled him down the nights and down the days. I fled him down the arches of the years.

I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind. And in the midst of tears, I hid from him and under running laughter. Up-visited hopes I sped and shot precipitated a down, titanic glooms of chasmed fears from those strong feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy, they beat. And a voice beat more instant than the feet. All things betray thee who betrayest me.

[ 8 : 24 ] This is the beginning of Francis Thompson's poem entitled The Hound of Heaven. It's a poem about running away from God. And it's a poem about God running after us, doggedly pursuing us with his steadfast and fierce love. And that's what we see here in God's conversation with Moses.

God says to Moses, come, I'm sending you. And Moses has five objections. 311, who am I? 313, who are you? 41, they won't believe me. 410, I'm not eloquent.

413, oh my Lord, please send someone else. This morning we're going to look at Moses' resistance to the call of God in the part we've read so far. And then we'll look at the second half of chapter 4, where Moses finally obeys.

So let's look first at Moses' resistance. Let's consider Moses' objections and God's responses one by one. First, who am I? Chapter 3, verse 11. Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? This is an entirely reasonable and good question. God had just said, if you look up in verse 7 through 9, God had just said that he would deliver the people of Israel and bring them up out of Egypt. God had said the same thing back to Jacob back in Genesis. I myself will go down with you to Egypt and I myself will bring you up again. So Moses is saying, wait a minute.

God, you just said you were going to do this. Now you're asking me to do this. I can't do this. You're God. I'm a human being. Who am I? This is a perfectly right and reasonable question for any human being to ask when we're in the presence of a holy God. Who am I to stand in your presence? Who am I to be called your ambassador? Who am I that you would choose me and give me an important task to play, an important role to play, an important task to carry out? Now look at God's response. Verse 12.

[10:45] Notice first what God doesn't say. God doesn't say the silly things that modern Americans like to repeat. You're good enough. I believe in you. You can do it. I know you can. No. God says simply, but I will be with you. It doesn't matter who you are. What really matters is who I am.

And that I am with you. And that's a word of enormous comfort that God speaks over and over to his people throughout the scriptures. Here to Moses and then to Joshua. God says to Joshua in the beginning of Joshua chapter 1 verse 5, just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

Be strong and courageous. We could give many examples throughout the Old Testament in Isaiah, in Haggai, in many other places. But in the New Testament, Jesus says the same thing.

When he's ready to ascend back up to heaven, he says to his disciples, go and make disciples of all nations, and behold, I am with you always. To the very end of the age.

So God comforts and reassures him. But perhaps Moses is thinking, okay, you're saying that you'll be with me, but who exactly are you? That brings us to a second objection or question in verse 13.

[12:17] If the people ask me your name, what should I tell them? In other words, who exactly are you? Prior to this incident, it's not exactly clear what Moses or the rest of the Israelites in Egypt believed about God. Had they faithfully handed down the traditions from Abraham and Isaac and Jacob about the one true God who had made a covenant and made promises to his people? Or over the hundreds of years of being in Egypt, had they little by little accepted the pagan ways of worshipping many different gods that were common in Egypt and throughout the ancient world? The Bible doesn't tell us.

We can't be totally sure. Perhaps Moses is anticipating a question that he thinks the people will ask him, or perhaps he's asking the same question. Who are you, Lord?

And again, like Moses' first question, this is a good question. We shouldn't fault Moses for asking this question. It's not a bad question to ask then or now. It's the same question Saul asked on the road to Damascus. The reading we heard earlier when he heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, who are you, Lord? Maybe you're asking that question.

Maybe you have a sense that there's something or someone out there, but you're not even sure what to call it or what that being is like. You're saying, who are you, God? That's a great question to be asking. And this is a great place to come because the book of Exodus is written to answer exactly that question. And as we continue through it, I hope that you'll see what the Bible says about who the one true God is. God's answer here to Moses is, I am who I am. In other words, he is the self-existent, uncreated one, the source of all that is and was and ever will be.

And he's also the God who made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who makes and keeps his promises. That's the God we're talking about here. That's what Pastor Nick's sermon focused on two weeks ago. You can listen to it on the website if you weren't here. And then God goes on in verse 16 to 22. He gives Moses a preview of upcoming events and upcoming responsibilities. First, Moses must speak to the elders of Israel, verse 16 and 17. Then they have to go to the king of Egypt, but the king won't let the people go, so God will strike them, Egypt with plagues. Eventually, the king will let him go, and the people will take all kinds of gold and jewelry and clothing that are freely given to them with them, a sort of payback of all the wages that they had been denied for years when they were enslaved. But that brings us to Moses' third objection.

[15:16] Chapter 4, verse 1, but they won't believe me. Again, an understandable objection given Moses' past experience. The last time Moses had tried to intervene on behalf of the people of Israel in chapter 2, he tried to settle a dispute, and the people rejected him. They said, who made you a

ruler and judge over us? Moses says, how can I know they'll believe me now? They haven't seen me for years.

They rejected me the last time I was with them. Moses is scared and nervous about how the people will respond, and most of us would be too. And if you read the rest of Exodus, the people don't always respond positively. They don't always believe him. They don't always follow him. But there's a problem with Moses' third objection. If you look in chapter 3, verse 18, God says, they, that is the elders of Israel will listen to your voice. And what does Moses say in chapter 4, verse 1? But they won't listen to my voice. Moses is directly contradicting what God has just said. He's letting himself be controlled by his past failure and his present fear instead of trusting God's word and God's character and God's promise for the future. And yet, look at the Lord's response to Moses. God doesn't just ignore his objection or dismiss it. He gives Moses three authenticating signs to perform for the Israelites.

Moses' staff becomes a snake. Moses' hand is afflicted and then healed of his skin disease. And third, the water from the Nile will turn to blood. Each sign visibly demonstrates God's authority. The first sign demonstrates God's authority over Pharaoh, actually. The snake was the most prominent symbol of the Egyptian Pharaoh. If you look at pictures of Pharaoh's headdresses or crowns, they looked like a snake. It was a symbol of royalty and deity and authority in ancient Egypt.

And so, the first sign demonstrates that God has authority over that. The second sign demonstrates God's authority over disease and affliction. And notice, as with the first two signs, there's a pattern of judgment followed by restoration. And that's what we see in Exodus, that God is the God of righteous judgment, but He's also the God of restoration and redemption and salvation.

[ 18 : 03 ] And then the third sign demonstrates God's authority over nature. The Nile River was revered in Egypt as the giver and taker of life. But God is saying, no, I am the true, the giver and taker of life, the one who made all things. So, each of the signs points to God's authority, but in each case, God uses something very ordinary to do something extraordinary. In ancient Egypt, the pagan priests would cast magic spells using secret formulas that supposedly gave them power over nature and over the gods. But this isn't like Egyptian magic, what God tells Moses to do. There are no secret spells.

Moses. Moses just obeys God's command. In fact, Moses doesn't seem to know what's going to happen. Verse 3, he throws the staff down and becomes a snake. Moses runs away. He ain't expecting that one.

And then he puts his hand in his cloak and it says, behold. That means look. It means he's surprised. It's afflicted with a skin disease. And then he puts it back and behold, again, it's healed. He doesn't know what's coming next. He simply obeys God's word. So, all the signs display not Moses' power, not Moses' wisdom, not Moses' greatness, but God's power and God's wisdom and God's greatness.

But that's still not enough for Moses. He's got a fourth objection. Chapter 4, verse 10. I'm not eloquent. Now, scholars have debated about this one. Probably will continue to debate until the second coming. Did Moses have a speech impediment? Had he lost his command of the Egyptian language while living abroad? Was he saying he lacked diplomacy skills? Or I think most likely, was he just being modest and self-deprecating in a culturally recognized way? I am not worthy of being your mouthpiece. Something like that. Whatever exactly Moses meant, the tone of God's response shifts a little bit. Don't you think? God starts to get a little in Moses' face, as you might say.

[ 20 : 21 ] He starts launching questions at Moses. Who made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? You see, God has made you and he can use you with all your natural limitations, even with your physical disabilities or deformities. He can heal you or he can manifest his glory even through your weakness. Twice in verse 10, Moses points to his own inadequacies. He says, I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and of tongue. And then twice in God's response, God points to his own all-sufficiency. Is it not I who made you? I will be with your mouth. The question is, which I is the more important one? Moses or God? Is it my feeling of inadequacy, my lack of skills and preparation, my past record, or God's sufficiency and God's creative power and God's promise for the future? Which matters more? In verse 12, God tells Moses for the fourth time, go. He said it already back in chapter 3, verse 10. It's translated come in the ESV, but it's the same verb. And then in 316 and 318, he said, go, gather the elders, go to the king of Egypt. And finally, God says, now, therefore, go. Enough questions, enough objections, time

to get up and go. But then in verse 13, we come to Moses' fifth and final objection. Oh, my Lord, please send someone else. Now, Moses phrases this about as politely as you can in Hebrew. Literally, it's, Lord, please send by the hand of whom you will send.

But the meaning is very clear. Anybody else but me. And here in verse 14, for the first time, it says, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. God was not angry at any of his other questions or objections. But he does get angry at this one. Because Moses has run out of legitimate questions.

He's run out of reasonable objections. God has answered them all. And Moses can't hide his underlying resistance any longer. He just doesn't want to do it. There's a time to ask honest, humble questions in light of God's holiness. Who am I? There's a time to ask honest questions in light of our ignorance.

Who are you, Lord? We've seen God patiently address Moses' doubts and fears when Moses said, they won't believe me. And we've seen God powerfully urge him on when Moses tried to disqualify himself.

And still after all this, Moses just wanted to say no. Can you relate to Moses? Let me speak to you for a minute if you're not yet a Christian.

[ 23 : 37 ] Maybe you've been asking questions about God for a long time. Some of them might be sincere questions, good and honest questions like the first two. Sometimes you might admit there are fearful questions that sort of border on lame excuses like three and four.

But despite what attracts you to Christianity, is there also underneath your questions a part of you that just doesn't want to say yes to Jesus?

Maybe you're afraid of what your life will become if you actually commit to following him. Maybe you don't want to give up your sense of self-sufficiency and autonomy.

C.S. Lewis described his own internal resistance to God in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*. A little bit of his background. As a child, he had been brought to church and taught to say his prayers. But then when he was nine, his mother died. And his father sent him away to a boarding school. The headmaster of the boarding school was later deemed insane. At that boarding school, he became an atheist.

[ 24 : 52 ] At the age of 17, he wrote to a friend, I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them. And from a philosophical standpoint, Christianity is not even the best. But his story didn't end there.

He was a voracious reader. And he found himself drawn in by Christian authors like George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton. While studying at Oxford, he found himself talking with thoughtful Christian scholars like J.R.R. Tolkien.

And he found himself wanting what they believed in. He wrote, Then one evening, That threw him for a complete loop.

Could Christianity actually be true? Not just what I want, but what's real? But at the same time, as he was increasingly drawn to Christianity, he still resisted.

He wrote this, Agnostics will talk cheerfully about man's search for God. To me, as I then was, they might as well have talked about the mouse's search for the cat.

[ 26 : 24 ] Remember, I had always wanted, above all things, not to be interfered with. I had wanted to call my soul my own. I had been far more anxious to avoid suffering than to achieve delight.

I had always aimed at limited liabilities. Of course, all that was threatened by the potential demands of an infinite God. You must picture me alone, he wrote, in that room in Oxford, his study room. Night after night, feeling whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.

That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the spring term of 1929, I gave in and admitted that God was God and knelt and prayed.

Perhaps that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing. The divine humility, which will accept a convert even on such terms.

[ 27 : 43 ] Who can rightly adore that love, which will open the high gates to a prodigal, who is brought in, kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape.

That's you, will you give in? Admit that God is God. And kneel and pray. Today? Listen to this invitation from the conclusion of the poem that I read at the beginning.  
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee? Save me. Save only me. All which I took from thee I did but take, not for thy harms, but just that thou mightest seek it in my arms.  
All which thy child's mistake fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home. Rise. Clasp my hand. Stand and come.

Jesus says come. He's the one you've been looking for all along. Because he's been looking for you all along. But maybe you are a Christian.

[ 29 : 04 ] Maybe you've responded to God's call to salvation in Christ. But maybe you've been resisting God's call to service. These are two of the main ways we see the concept of calling worked out in the New Testament.

It's God calling us to believe and belong to Jesus. And God calling us to serve him. To a mission. To actively live and work for him.

And ultimately these two callings are part of the same package. You really can't separate them too much. They sort of happen right here together for Moses.

They happen in a package deal for Paul too. He gets his conversion and his calling all at once. But maybe you are a Christian and you're saying in some shape or form, there's some area of service that God has put before you, or you're being asked to take on a good thing, and you're saying, Lord, anybody else but me.

Please, no, not that. But look at what God does in verse 14 to 17 in response to Moses' resistance. God doesn't get rid of him. God doesn't say, forget you, I'll ask somebody else.

[ 30 : 18 ] No, what he does is he finds somebody else to stand next to Moses. He does find someone else. He says, Aaron's going to come.

And Aaron will stand with you, and he can even speak for you. Ironically, Moses ends up doing most of the talking later on. But God says to Moses, you won't be alone in this endeavor.

Moses had Aaron and later the elders of Israel on his team. And later on, Jesus would send out his disciples two by two, perhaps so they wouldn't be alone, so they wouldn't so easily get discouraged, so they'd have accountability in carrying out their mission.

Sometimes when we're nervous and scared and resistant to God, in the face of God's call to service, God sends a brother or sister in Christ to stand with us, even to speak with us and for us, to give us courage and accountability and perseverance.

He doesn't leave us to carry out our calling alone. Psalm 103 says, Then God said, In verse 17, he says, Take this staff.

[ 31 : 41 ] Verse 20 calls it the staff of God. Just a regular shepherd's instrument. But one day God would use it to part the Red Sea and bring water from a rock.

You see, God equips all those whom he calls. God will not call you to some area of service and leave you without it and then refuse to equip you.

He'll give you what you need. So far we've seen Moses' resistance to God's call. That's the first half of our message this morning.

But the rest of chapter 4, we see Moses' obedience. I'm just going to summarize some of this section. In verses 18 to 20, the beginning of this section, we see Moses leaving Midian.

And the key word in these verses is, Go back. Four times in these verses we see that verb. Moses goes back to Jethro, his father-in-law, who's also his employer, asking for permission.

[ 32 : 45 ] Please let me go back to Egypt. He doesn't give all the details, but his request is clear enough. Jethro says, Go in peace. The Lord says, Go back. You're no longer on the Egyptian FBI Most Wanted list.

So Moses packs up his family and goes back. After all of Moses' objections, after all his stubborn resistance, he finally obeys and goes. And at the end of this section, verses 27 to 31, Moses arrives back in Egypt.

He meets Aaron. They gather the elders of Israel. Aaron speaks on Moses' behalf. And just as God has said, the people believe. And verse 31 tells us, They bowed their heads and worshiped.

They're no longer bowing their heads under the unbearable burdens of slavery. They're willingly bowing their heads to worship the one true God. But then there's, in the middle of this section, verse 24 to 26, we have a mysterious incident that occurred somewhere between Midian and Egypt at a lodging place on the way.

And we're going to sort of park here for a while, for the rest of our message. Look down at verse 24. Let me read verse 24 through 26. At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.

[ 34 : 02 ] Then Zipporah took a flint, that is a knife, and cut off her son's foreskin and touched his 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 these verses have left many people very confused. Perhaps God included passages like this that are perplexing, partly just to humble us and make us realize that we don't know everything. But I think we can make some sense of it by looking at this passage in its context. Verses 22 to 23, God says to Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn son.

He says, If you refuse to let my firstborn son go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son. In other words, Pharaoh's firstborn son is in danger because of Pharaoh's, or will be in danger because of Pharaoh's ongoing disobedience to God's commands.

What we see in verses 24 to 26 is that Moses' firstborn son is in danger because Moses has failed to obey God's command. Now let me explain where I'm getting that.

[ 35 : 24 ] Many people think that verse 24 is referring to Moses. Okay, if you think that, it would go like this. The Lord met Moses and sought to put Moses to death. And then Zipporah, Moses' wife, took a knife, circumcised her skin, and touched Moses' feet with a bloody foreskin.

So, verse 26, God let Moses alone. So that's a possible interpretation. The main reason in favor of that is that the rest of this episode is about Moses.

But, Moses' name actually never appears in these verses, verses 24 to 26. In the middle of verse 25, the ESV interprets verse 25 as a reference to Moses' feet, but if you look at the footnote, it says in Hebrew, it's just his.

Okay, so it's interpretation, but no, the only male who is clearly identified in verse 24 to 26 is Zipporah's son. That is Moses' firstborn son, Gersh, whose name was Gershom.

So, I think it's better to understand the hymn in verse 24 and verse 26 as Moses' firstborn son.

Gershom, Moses' firstborn son, was in danger because Moses had failed to obey God's command to circumcise him.

[ 36 : 44 ] Now, you might say, why is circumcision such a big deal that God would, that he would be, someone would be in mortal danger for not following through on that command?

But when God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17, this is what he said to Abraham. He said, this is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your offspring after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised. It shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

And then he said, any uncircumcised male shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant. So, in the Old Testament, circumcision represented cutting off or putting away everything that was displeasing to God, unclean and displeasing to God.

And dedicating oneself to God fully for the task ahead. It was like saying your vows and signing a marriage license. You can't get married without doing those things.

[ 37 : 53 ] It was a sign that you were in on God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And if you were a male, there were no exceptions. But here's the problem. Moses is the one whom God has chosen to lead His people out of Egypt.

And yet Moses had failed to follow through on this most basic requirement in his own family. He was supposed to circumcise his son at eight days old.

But Gershom was much older than that. Verse 20 indicates that Moses had at least two sons by this time. There are two sons of Moses that are named in the Bible. So, Gershom had a younger brother.

And Moses had lived in Midian for 40 years. So, depending when he married Zipporah and when they had kids, Gershom could have well been an older child or even a full-grown adult. Thankfully, verse 25, Zipporah steps in and saves the day.

She circumcises him on the spot. She realizes what needs to be done and she does it and she saves the day and God's wrath is turned away. Now, that's basically what's going on.

[ 39 : 00 ] what do we take away from this mysterious incident? Five things. We'll conclude with these five. First, we see a warning to Moses that he is not exempt from obeying the Lord's commands.

Sometimes religious leaders can be tempted to think, I'm doing so much for God. I've sacrificed so much to be obedient to Him. I can skate by in one or two areas that are relatively minor. I can intentionally, willfully neglect some of God's commands because I'm sacrificing and obeying so much in other ways.

That's a recipe for disaster. It has caused harm to countless churches and communities when a pastor or someone else lets that mindset sink in.

The only way to lead God's people is to lead by example of what Paul calls sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Christ. So it's a challenge to all of us who are leaders, first of all.

[ 40 : 20 ] Second, we see that even though Moses' son, or possibly Moses himself if you interpret it that way, was in grave danger for disobeying the Lord's command, the Lord provided sufficient time for the error to be corrected.

It's sort of like God was saying to Moses, look, this area of obedience has been neglected far too long. We need to fix this now.

And sometimes the Holy Spirit does the same thing for Christian believers. He presses home one of God's clearly written commands in Scripture.

Christians sometimes call this conviction of sin. Maybe you've been neglecting one of God's clear commands in the Scripture for a long time and you know it.

Don't wait any longer. If you're a Christian believer and you haven't been baptized, why are you waiting? God commands it. If you're harboring a root of bitterness against someone, confess it.

[ 41 : 36 ] If you've deceived someone or lied to someone, go tell them the truth even if it was a long time ago and you hope they forgot it. If you're in a sexually immoral relationship, break it off.

Don't delay. Several years ago, I was visiting a friend who was a relatively new Christian. He had been addicted to pornography for several years.

But he hadn't really taken decisive action to stop. He might have said, I don't know how I could stop. In desperation, he prayed for deliverance. A few days later, he got mugged walking down his street in Washington, D.C.

Three guys took his laptop and ran off. I'd kid you not. He said, I guess God answered my prayer. I was doing Teach for America.

I was too poor to buy myself a new laptop. I had to borrow my housemates and work in the common room. The issue was solved, at least for a time. Don't wait until you get mugged.

[ 42 : 48 ] Don't wait for some near-death experience like Moses or his son experienced here before you're moved to repent. If you persist in a pattern of sin, you're not only putting yourself in danger, you're putting, you're endangering other people who depend on you as well.

So that's the second thing we see. A call to repentance. Third, we see a woman of courage.

Zipporah stepped in at just the right time. Whether it was Moses or his son who was in danger, this episode does not reflect well on Moses. Moses is completely passive here.

He does nothing. He says nothing. But thank God for Zipporah. She was truly Moses' helper, his strong ally. Decisive, fearless, competent in an emergency, and above all, obedient to God.

She saw what needed to be done, and she did it without hesitating. Praise God for women of faith and courage like Zipporah. Fourth, we see that salvation comes through the blood.

[ 43 : 57 ] The end of verse 25 is perhaps the most difficult part of this passage to understand and interpret. Zipporah touched his feet with the bloody foreskin and said, surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me.

Whose feet does she touch? What does bridegroom of blood mean? The phrase appears nowhere else in the Bible or in ancient literature. It's hard to even know how to translate it or if this is even the right way to translate it.

But what is clear from this mysterious verse is the saving significance of blood. It's the blood that turns away the wrath of God.

Zipporah touched his feet with the bloody foreskin. In Exodus 12, the same verb is used when Moses instructs the Israelites on Passover night, kill the Passover lamb, take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood and touch the top and both sides of the door with the blood.

When he sees the blood, the Lord will pass over the door and the destroying angel will not destroy that house. And that's exactly what we see here in this very compact narrative.

[ 45 : 19 ] The blood is applied and God's wrath is averted and the firstborn son is saved. That's exactly what's going to happen in chapter 12 when we get to the Passover.

And of course, ultimately, this mysterious incident points us to the greatest and most perfect sacrifice of all.

Jesus Christ shed his blood on the cross. We were under God's wrath because of our sin and rebellion, but Jesus stepped in and he shed his blood and when his blood is applied to us, when we identify with him by faith and he claims us as his own, we're saved and we can go on our way rejoicing and without fear of condemnation.

Hebrews 9 says, how much more will the blood of Christ who offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Saved by the blood. Fifth and finally, Moses didn't need, Moses didn't just need God's mercy in the midst of his resistance.

[ 46 : 46 ] He also needed God's mercy in the midst of his obedience. You see that? Moses finally agreed to work for God, to obey God, to go back to Egypt and do what God said, but God still had more work to do in Moses.

in the process. And that's really good news because what it means is that God uses imperfect people who don't have it all together to carry out his work in the world.

Last week, I went over to the 180 Center where they're hosting the Warming Center for the Homeless this winter. And they run a day program. They were doing conflict resolution. It was great. Honestly, we could all learn something by going there and just observing what they do. This is with the guys in their recovery house who are recovering from addictions and they use Peacemaker Ministries and those principles.

It's pretty good. But I know there's a poster on their wall that caught my eye. And I want to conclude with this. The poster says, Do you seriously think that God can't use you?

[ 47 : 58 ] Noah was a drunk. Isaac was a daydreamer. Jacob was a liar. Joseph was abused. Gideon was afraid. Rahab was a prostitute. David had an affair.

Abraham was too old. Jeremiah was too young. Elijah was suicidal. Jonah ran away from God. Martha worried about everything. The disciples fell asleep while praying.

Peter denied Christ. Lazarus was dead. And then it quotes this verse which I'll conclude with.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. When God called you to belong to Jesus and to serve Him. God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God 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.

[ 49 : 00 ] It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God that is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.

Amen and amen. Let's pray. God, we thank you for your mercy to Moses. We thank you for answering all his questions.

We thank you for exposing his resistance. We thank you for sending him help. We thank you for turning his heart that he was obedient to you.

We thank you, Lord, that for showing your mercy to him even in the midst of his obedience in an area that he still needed to make right. Lord, as we come to the communion table, would we take all these truths to heart that you have saved us by your blood, that you call us to belong to you and to serve you.

Lord, would you, as we take the bread and the cup with those, would your spirit make those truths real to our hearts? We pray this in Jesus' name.

[ 50 : 26 ] Amen.