

Obedience

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[0 : 0 0] Now as we continue in our progress through these chapters in Genesis, we come to this latter part of chapter 4, where having had the appearance of the Lord in the burning bush in Mount Sinai, and then all this sort of exchange that takes place between Moses and the Lord and all the excuses that Moses seeks to come up with and how the Lord answers to everyone, finally Moses succumbs to the Lord's will and goes back now, as we begin our passage here, to his father-in-law to explain that he needs to go back into Egypt.

So we see in verse 18 that although Moses is now a man of 80 years old, and although he is in many ways, you would expect, independent and able to do at the command of the Lord whatever he requires to do, we see that there is first of all no disrespect here of his father-in-law.

Moses is 80, his father-in-law must be even older. So here we have him showing respect to his father-in-law and asking, Let me go, I pray thee, return unto my brethren which are in Egypt and see whether they be yet alive.

Now 40 years have passed. That's the equivalent of if you hadn't seen any of your family since 1979. So 40 years, anything, how many people can you think of who were here in 1979 or 89 or 99 or even 09 or even two years ago who aren't here now?

40 years is a long time. An awful lot of people have gone into eternity since then. So let me see if any of my brethren are yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, go in peace.

[1 : 4 1] He seeks the blessing of his father-in-law. He has no disrespect. In fact, you could say that although he doesn't tell him all the details of what has happened in Mount Sinai and the appearance of the Lord in the burning bush and all that he has been commissioned to undertake, this is in some ways perhaps to spare the old man to show grit and respect.

And remember that it's not just that he'd be worried about him with all that is going to happen and the confrontation with Pharaoh and so on and the danger that he might be putting Jethro's daughter and grandchildren in and so on.

But also, what is Jethro? He is a priest of Midian. That means that in his own way and with the best of his ability, however imperfectly, he's been serving the true God, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob all these years and seeking to serve him as well as he can.

And yet, as far as we know, he's never had a special appearance of the Lord in a burning bush. He's never had the Lord's angel appear to him and give him directions and a special commission.

And if his son-in-law says, oh, you wouldn't believe what I've just seen. I've had this amazing, there's a burning bush and he didn't consume and the Lord spoke to me either. And he wants me to go back into Egypt and bring the Israelites out of captivity and so on.

[3 : 0 1] I'm sure Jethro would have been directed for him and filled with the joy of the Lord's spirit and the power and so on. But that's probably part of me thinking, well, I've been a priest of the Lord all these years.

You know what? Nothing like that's ever happened to me. Maybe, maybe I'm speculating too much here. But there is a sense in which Moses is not wrong to withhold the details from his father-in-law.

All he tells him is what he needs to know. He has to go back into Egypt and he seeks his blessing in doing so. Which, of course, he receives. Jethro said to Moses, go in peace.

So there is no disrespect here. To his father-in-law. Secondly, there are to be no distractions. Verse 19, the Lord said to Moses and Miriam, go return into Egypt for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

Now you'll remember, of course, that when Pharaoh had heard that Moses had killed the Egyptian, he sought to kill him. And for political reasons, almost certainly, he could not allow an upstart Hebrew.

[4 : 00] He had all the privileges of the Egyptian court to then just kill an Egyptian overseer. That could cause a slave revolt. It could cause people to rise up. It could cause trouble for the Egyptians.

So a price was put on Moses' head. And his life was forfeit. But commentators tell us that Egyptian law was such that when a sentence of death was put upon an individual by a particular king or by a particular pharaoh, when that king died, the sentence died with him.

So even if that pharaoh has lived for all of these 40 years, he is now dead. And the sentence dies with him. If not for nothing, the Lord says, the men are dead.

All the men are dead which sought thy life. So in other words, when you go back, and this might have been one of the reasons why Moses was hesitant initially, that there was a price in his head, there was a standing law that he was to be killed when he returned into Egypt.

That has now fallen into disuse. It is now gone because Pharaoh has died. So the sentence against him dies with it. In other words, when he goes into Egypt to bring the Hebrews out of Egypt, there's going to be enough to worry about.

[5 : 13] There's going to be enough of a confrontation, enough of a job to do without these secondary distractions. There are to be no distractions, no disrespect to his father-in-law, no distractions from the job in hand.

He has, in other words, only the task in hand to worry about. All the men are dead which sought thy life. Also, thirdly, we want to recognise that he intends to persuade or reassure Jethro that he intends no desertion of Jethro's daughter and her children.

He seeks initially at least to take his wife and children with him. Moses took his wife, verse 20, and his sons. Now notice that sons is in plural. We haven't been told yet about his second son, who is named in chapter 18, where we're told that his name is Eliezer or Elazar.

But we were told about his first son that was born in Gershom, in verse 22 of chapter 2. She gave him a son and he called his name Gershom, for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land, and Gershom meet a stranger here.

But whereas Eliezer, or Elazar, of whom we read in chapter 18, when she comes, she meets him again with his two sons. Eliezer, for the God of my father said he was mine help.

[6 : 35] My God is my help, is what Eliezer means. But we're not told about Eliezer's name here. We're only told that he has his sons, plural. Set them upon an ass and he returned to the land of Egypt.

That means he set off on the journey, because obviously he doesn't reach Egypt right then and there. Aaron, as we read further down, meets him in the Mount of God. Meets him in the place where he has had the vision of the burning bush, which was not consumed.

So Aaron meets him in the Mount of God, verse 27. But he sets off for Egypt. So there is no desertion. He intends to take his wife and his children with him, despite all the dangers.

He wants to demonstrate that he's not seeking to just run off and go back to his own people and leave them in her father's house. He intends them to be part of this. Clearly, that subsequently changes.

Because as we read in chapter 18, that then Jethro brings them back then, after he had sent them back, verse 2 of chapter 18. At what point he sent them back?

[7 : 38] Most likely in the course of this latter part of chapter 4, where we have the incident that we'll come to about the circumcision of almost certainly the younger son. But we'll come to that in just a minute.

But the dangers to which they would be exposed, they are prepared to enter into that with Moses. There would be no desertion. Also, we see, verses 21 to 23, that the Lord intends confrontation.

You might think, well, wouldn't it be so much easier if the Lord just softened Pharaoh's heart instead of pardoning it? And he just made Pharaoh think, you know, we've had these poor Hebrews for 400 years.

They've worked so hard for us. They've done really well. And now they want to go out and serve their God in Egypt. Well, come on, fair is fair. Let's just let them go. In fact, let's give them some gold and silver and, you know, as wages for all the work they've done and just wave them off without good wishes.

Why don't we just do that? The Lord could have changed Pharaoh's heart to make him want to do that. Why wouldn't that be a problem? Well, one reason it might not be a problem is because then the Israelites would always have the idea that they were in the desert or they were in Canaan only by the good graces of the king of Egypt.

[8 : 55] Only because the gods of Egypt and the king of Egypt had went them off by by with goodwill. But they had always only goodwill to the Hebrews. That Egypt was a nice place. That it was a place of freedom and liberty and kindness.

And off you go into your freedom and here's the desert, my comparison. Oh, let's go back to Egypt where everything was good and nice and they were kind to us. It was bad enough even when they had treated them as they did.

They still wanted to go back to Egypt somewhere. But no, the Lord intends a confrontation. Remember that Pharaoh was regarded by his people as a god.

He regarded himself as a god. When you assumed the throne, you assumed divine status. There were umpteen gods in Egypt. The river was a god.

The alligators were taken as being representatives of gods. The jackals of the deserts were taken as being representations of gods. The place was awash with pagan deities.

[9 : 56] And so much idolatry, the Israelites had inevitably absorbed themselves. This is the superpower of that time in the ancient world.

You would think there was no standing against Egypt, even by another rival kingdom anywhere in the world, let alone by their own slave population.

What the Lord intends is a confrontation between this, the world's greatest superpower to date, and the Lord himself, with nothing but his own slaves.

Nothing but his own people. And they're not much help there. So it is purely between the Lord and the power of Egypt and its gods. This is a confrontation the Lord intends to have.

He intends to demonstrate not only the emptiness and utility of the Egyptian pagan gods, but he intends to demonstrate to the Israelites that the only reason that they are free at all is because the sheer power of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has broken the power of Egypt, has broken the very chains that held them, and has moved the very powers of nature to get them out of Egypt.

[11 : 15] Because they were precious in his sight. He intends these momentous events to happen. He is not just seeking to just bring them out by the easiest means possible.

Let's just make it all nice and smooth and easy. He intends this confrontation. He intends this conflict so that the Israelites will never forget it.

And if you think about it right through the Old Testament and on into the New, this more than anything is what the Israelites are called upon to remember with the Passover.

We were slaves in Egypt. And with a high hand the Lord brought us out and brought us into a good land and into the land he had prepared for us.

The Lord delivered them. Not Moses, not Aaron, not any man, not Pharaoh. The Lord and the Lord alone. This is a confrontation the Lord intends to have.

[12 : 11] And he says that he will do all these wonders before Pharaoh, but I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go. Now you might think, well, here's a wee bit of a moral problem here.

If the Lord is hardening Pharaoh's heart, does that mean that left to himself, Pharaoh would have said, of course you can go out with this, of course you can go and serve you, but if nasty God hadn't somehow hardened his heart.

Well, you've got to remember, as we go through these chapters, you will see that some of the time the Lord is explicitly stated as having hardened Pharaoh's heart. Some of the time Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart, and other times it's simply that Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

The Lord is not unjust in hardening Pharaoh's heart, but rather we have to recognize that hardness of heart against the Lord, the state of fallenness, the state of sin, of enmity against God, is our natural default position.

As human beings. Whether we are pagans in Egypt, or whether we are nominal Christians in a nominally Christian country, or whether we are complete, total heathen unbelievers in some other part of the world, it doesn't matter.

[13 : 32] Our normal default position, until and unless we are awakened by grace, and unable to believe in the Lord Almighty through his Son, Jesus Christ, our normal position is enmity with God.

That is our natural condition. Jeremiah puts it this way, remember, chapter 17, verses 9 and 10. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

And if we want the context of those statements, we look back the previous three or four verses, where we read, Thus saith the Lord, verse 5 of Jeremiah 17, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the willows, in a salt land, and not inhabit it.

[14 : 43] What's the context here? What's the description here? It's a wild, like prairie grass, desert grass, which is brittle, which is unwatered, which is wild and unmoist, where it is barren, where it is desert.

How would you make that lush? How would you make it green and fruitful? Well, you'd need to supply it with water, wouldn't you? You'd need it to provide that, which by nature the desert does not have.

Then we go on to it, Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see.

When he cometh, for her leaves shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. In other words, if you've got a ready supply of water planted beside a river, then even if there's drought, even if there's lack of rain, you've got a constant supply of that without which you perish.

If you are planted in the Lord, then you have, as it were, the spiritual equivalent of that water of life that is constantly keeping you refreshed, and moistened, and supplied with that which is life-giving.

[16 : 03] And without that life-giving water, you dry up and you perish. And that drying up and perishing is the desert equivalent of the natural heart.

And that's our normal condition. We look at Proverbs in chapter 9. We see it, verse 3. Also, yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart for them.

And after that, they go to the dead. What is our madness? Our insanity is that against all the evidence and against all the odds, we are by nature at enmity with God.

He offers to supply the water of life to our souls. He offers to feed us and look after us and care for us and to make us His friends, His children, but our nature is to be at enmity with Him.

If we have the Lord, the Old Testament imagery is of a tree planted by rivers of water. Psalm 1 is another example of that. What the Lord Jesus says is that if anybody believes in Him, then the Spirit is like a well of water springing up inside Him unto eternal life.

[17 : 12] We are constantly supplied and refreshed with that water of life. But that is something God does, not something we have by nature. You see, if you think of soil or clay or something like that, we are creatures.

We're the clay, He's the potter. What happens if all the water in the clay dries up? If it isn't supplied, it becomes hard and brittle, and you drop it and it shatters into pieces.

But if it is kept moist and watered, then it is workable, it is usable, it can be fashioned by the potter into something profitable, something valuable, something beautiful, as long as there is this constant supply of moisture.

All the Lord is doing when somebody's heart is hardened is He withholds that supply which is in His gift by nature.

The Lord by nature gives or withholds as He sees fit. He is not unjust in hardening anybody's heart.

[18 : 17] All that He does is He withholds that without which our hearts remain hard and lost and brittle and dry.

So this is what the Lord says, I will harden His heart that He shall not let the people go because God intends this confrontation. He intends a head-on collision between the power of God and the power of ancient Egypt, which was unlike any other power the ancient world had seen up to that point.

And what we find in verse 22, of which the significance will be perhaps lost in us unless we draw attention to it, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.

Now this phrase you'll be familiar with throughout the Old Testament prophets. This is part of the voice of their authority. Thus saith the Lord. And it's how you know a true prophet of the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord. Because God has put His word into their heart and into their lips and they speak it forth to the people. But this is the first time it is ever used. This is the first time rather.

[19 : 24] It is recorded as ever being used. That the Lord says to Moses, Tell Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord. It is the commission of authority from the living God.

That which the prophets have down the ages. Thus saith the Lord. And it's never been cited in this way previously in the Old Testament up until now. But from here on, it will be cited repeatedly by the Lord's chosen messenger.

Israel is my son. Even my firstborn, and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me. And if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will save thy son, even thy firstborn.

Now if anybody was due reverence and obedience to anybody, it was sons to their fathers. In the normal way of things, a son would learn the trade or the business of his father.

He would render all due obedience and attention to everything his father taught him. He would submit to his discipline. He would learn his trade, his profession, his ability. And in the fullness of time, he would inherit.

[20 : 32] He would become like his father. He would become the image of his father and he would inherit everything that his father had laid up. So when the Lord says, Israel is my son, even my firstborn, he is saying basically, this is my chosen people.

I intend to train them up, to discipline them, yes, to provide for them, to bless them, to make them, to learn my ways, to become like me and to inherit what I have laid up for them and prepared for them.

Israel is my son, even my firstborn. And I say unto thee, let my son go that he may serve me. At the moment, Pharaoh, you are keeping my son from me.

You don't have the right to do that. Nor do they have the right to ignore me. I require them to attend upon me. I require them to learn of me. I require them to become like me.

As any father would expect of his son, particularly in that time and culture, let my son go that he may serve me. And if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

[21 : 45] Now, of course, this demonstrates the sheer divine power of the Lord. It's like, you know, nowadays we talk about precision bombing with our armaments and so on.

So a target can hone in with an infrared dot on a particular target and be really precise and exactly where it is to hit. You can avoid as far as possible civilian targets in hospitals and so on and hit exactly where the enemy or the terrorists or whoever they happen to be are placed.

That's meant to be the idea of precision bombing. Well, this is even more precise than that. This is where the Lord is saying, I can go into any home. I can identify exactly who the firstborn are.

It doesn't actually, apart from Pharaoh, specify firstborn sons. And later on in chapter 11 and in chapter 12 verses 29 and 30, it just simply says the firstborn, so we'd have to take it that daughters would include it in that.

It would know the divine power of the Lord. It would know exactly whatever age anybody was, whatever stage in a family they were, who were the firstborn and who were not.

[22 : 54] That is something which even families would struggle to know amongst the extended relations, but the Lord knows precisely who he is to target. He knows precisely who is going to fall victim to the hand of his justice.

It is precision and divine knowledge as to who is who in the entire world and who is placed and who stands as it were in the target of the Lord's perfect justice.

He does not necessarily say it's just going to be sons, but he does know with precision who stands to be laid low and who will not. This is the Lord's threat, but it is also his promise.

If thou wilt refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son even thy firstborn. Now see what we have here. Although there is this confrontation intended, there is always an option.

The Lord doesn't say, ha, see you? I'm going to destroy you. No matter what you do, no matter where you run, I'm going to end for you and I'm going to completely destroy you. Ha, there's nothing you can do about it.

[24 : 04] But rather, there is always an if. There is always an alternative. The Lord, even in his judgment, even in his wrath, makes a way of escape.

If you won't let my son go, then you will pay the price for the blood of your own son. If you will not repent, then you shall be destroyed. There is always an if.

There is always an option. There is always an alternative. There is always the possibility of mercy. And the door of that mercy is never closed by the Lord.

It is closed by the hardness and pride of our own hearts. That is our default position. Who is the Lord that I should listen to him?

Who is God that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord and I will not let the people go. So said Pharaoh. And so say we so often.

[24 : 59] Who is the Lord that he should tell me what to do? Who is the Lord that I should bow to his will? Who does he think he is telling me what I should and shouldn't do? That is the default position of our hearts.

And of course the cost is potentially fearful. But there is always the option of escape and of mercy. Now in these verses 24 to 27 these three verses this is perhaps or four verses here.

This is perhaps one of the thorniest or most difficult 23 to 26 24 to 26 verses which have caused so much debate and concern and anxiety and what on earth is going on here with this incident.

It came to pass by the way in the end that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Sought to kill Moses. Why on earth would God do that?

Is it really the Lord who are talking about here? Is it his angel? Is it some demon that is seeking to obstruct the work of deliverance from Egypt? What is going on here?

[26 : 05] Well we can think for example of how in other occasions where Balaam in Numbers chapter 22 is going to pronounce supposedly the curse against the children of Israel and where his donkey sees the angel with its sword drawn ahead of him and the life that he is in danger life is in danger and we get Numbers 22 verse 22 God's anger was kindled because he went and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversity against him that he was riding upon his ass and his two servants were with him and the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and his sword drawn in his hand and the ass turned out of the way and then we read verse 32 a little further on behold I went out to withstand thee said the angel because thy way is perverse before me and the ass saw me and turned from me these three times unless she had turned from me surely now also I had slain thee and saved her alive now you might think but why would Balaam be under threat from the Lord because he was doing what God told him to do the Lord could see his heart he could see his motives he could see all that was wrong there even though he was outwardly obeying the Lord likewise you can think of in 2

Samuel 24 where David sees after the plague visits the children of Israel David sees the angel of the Lord with his sword stretched out over Jerusalem ready to slay and the Lord saves the hand of the angel with his sword stretched out now whatever happens here that challenges Moses we do not know the precise nature of it but we do know that clearly it is that by which Moses life is in danger sought to kill him but he did not die whatever form it took it did not in fact kill him whether it was an angel of the Lord whether it was the Lord himself in some other form sought to kill him but stopped short of killing him now then when we have the incident with Zipporah and the sharp stone and the circumcising of her son then we know then clearly that the circumcising or the failure to circumcise what must be

Moses we assume younger son because only one son is mentioned as opposed to two if it was both sons that hadn't been circumcised it would specify plural but it says only one that implies that perhaps the elder son whatever age he is at has been circumcised presumably by Moses at an earlier stage and we must also assume by Zipporah's reaction her anger her you know the passion of her response here we must take it that she loathes and detests this practice it is bloody it is painful it is potentially life threatening it is potentially harmful to her beloved children although the Midianites would have been Ishmaelites and although Ishmael was of course circumcised by Abraham at roughly the age of 12 or 13 so we must assume that for the first few generations at least they carried on the practice of circumcision perhaps at the age of puberty as opposed to the age of infancy at 8 days old as the

Israelites did and as Abraham did with his children thereafter that maybe it had fallen into lapsing maybe when Moses circumcised their elder son Ziphar perhaps beholding the practice for the first time was so repelled by it and so disgusted by it and maybe they fell out over it but for whatever reason one of their sons was not circumcised and you would think that the Lord might say to Moses now before I send you into Egypt I expect you to put your house in order I expect you to sort out your situation with me if you've got things that need to be done if you need to sort out your spiritual relationship with me then get it sorted if your son hasn't been circumcised make sure that everything is right before you go in Egypt as my representative you better be a living example of all the law and the covenant being fulfilled how can you possibly call people to follow me if you are not following me or words to that effect clearly we think well come on does it really matter does it really matter if one goes through this right this Old

Testament sacrament or whatever does it matter to us does it matter to God well the Lord says in Genesis chapter 17 when he speaks to Abraham about it he says that the uncircumcised man child whose flesh and his foreskin is not circumcised that soul shall be cut off from his people he hath broken my covenant now clearly the Lord regards Moses as culpable rather than his infant son but it is the infant son whose life would also be in danger or being cut off or being destroyed if Moses fails to fulfill what the Lord required of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the generations since then and which it would seem Moses had first observed with his elder son but failed to do so with his younger son and the implication of these verses would be that he failed to do so because he and Zipporah had fallen out so much about the practice of it but now however it is implicated however it is enacted she can see and Moses can see that however the angel of the Lord or the Lord himself is now requiring this failure to fulfill his covenant requiring it at the hands of Moses

[32 : 12] Moses is at the point of death he is at the point of death himself because the Lord is causing him to answer for his failure to fulfill God's own requirements that I would suggest to you is one reason why is Moses the one doing it he is the head of the family he is the patriarch he should be circumcising his son rather than leaving it to his wife or to the mother why is she doing it she is doing it because Moses is not able to do it Moses is not able to do it because he is at the point of death whether it is by illness whether it is by the sword of the Lord as it were at his very throat or at his heart in the same way as the angel faced Dan Balaam by whatever means the Lord has reduced Moses to the point of death and it is obviously clear to both of them to Moses and Zipporah that the cause of that judgment and the cause of that death about to happen is their failure to observe this sign and seal of the covenant now this covenant matters to

God it may or may not matter to men but it matters to God we read that when the Israelites came at last into the land of Canaan Joshua chapter 5 verse 2 at that time the Lord said to Joshua make these sharp knives and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time and Joshua made him sharp knives and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins and this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise all the people that came out of Egypt that were males even all the men of war died in the wilderness by the way after they came out of Egypt now all the people that came out were circumcised but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt then they had not circumcised well the children of Israel walked 40 years in the wilderness till all the people that were men of war which came out of Egypt were consumed because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord and whom the Lord swore that he would not show them the land which the Lord swore unto their fathers that he would give us and their children whom he raised up in their stead them Joshua circumcised for they were uncircumcised because they had not circumcised them by the way another instance of disobedience because the people who were in rebellion against the Lord in the desert failed to circumcise their children they themselves had been in

Egypt you think well surely that's an example of their diligence it might be an example of their diligence or it might simply be an example of this was a badge of their cultural and racial identity and whilst they were in Egypt whilst they wanted to define themselves over and against the Egyptians they were quite content to circumcise their children once they were out in the desert and it was a covenant of the Lord and they were in rebellion against the Lord and grumbling about the food and grumbling about the lack of water and grumbling about how they don't obey Moses and grumbling about everything no doubt they neglected this too to us it seems well why would anybody bother with this ordinance because God has required it a sign and seal of the covenant of grace that is what a sacrament is now without wishing to be indelicate it means that every generation is marked with blood is marked by the fact of this surgical operation having happened it means that there is a clear distinction in the flesh of the

Israelite over against the flesh of the pagan it means also that as life is transmitted from generation to generation is transmitted in and through that member which is likewise marked in this way that the shedding of blood sanctifies and sets apart each generation of sons and fathers as they rise and pass away so that each generation is marked with the blood of the covenant each generation reproduces through the sign and seal of the covenant that every marriage is consummated with this mark of the covenant uniting the father and mother and so on this matters to God therefore it must matter to his people.

Zipporah took a short stone. We shouldn't understand this just to mean a stone lying around in the tent or whatever rather in ancient times people used flint. They used flint as a means of knives of axes and so on now clearly when iron came along that was far more valuable but until that happened people used stone.

[37 : 05] They used extremely sharp chipped away flint stone which was itself extremely sharp. Most knives at a certain time in history would be made of this sharpened stone.

Most axes would be of this sharpened stone. So when she takes up a sharp stone it almost certainly means a tool, a knife, fashioned for the purpose. And circumcised the foreskin, cut off the foreskin of her son.

It must mean her younger son. And presumably she had hoped not to have to do that. She hoped her younger son might be spared but clearly her husband is about to die.

She cast it at his feet, that is at Moses' feet, surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he, that is the Lord, let him go, that is Moses.

Because now that he has shown obedience, now that the requirement has been fulfilled, the requirement of justice or punishment is no longer there. Then she said, a bloody husband thou art because of the circumcision.

[38 : 07] This is a source of falling out between Zipporah and Moses. It is a source of disagreement. It is almost certainly at this point that Zipporah remains with the boys and then returns to her father.

It need not mean that they part on bad terms. It may simply mean that because the younger son now requires time to heal, which would be an extremely important part of the process.

Moses has to go on. She returns with her sons to her father. But this is a point of separation between the two of them. Moses had, you might say it, sinfully sought to indulge his wife's feelings over against his obedience to the Lord.

Repelled by what we must assume to have been the first circumcision of their elder son, she perhaps insisted that wasn't going to happen anymore. But the price of that was Moses was about to die.

And clearly, however we understand it, it must have been clear to both Zipporah and to Moses that the cause of Moses' imminent death was the failure to fulfill the sign and seal of the covenant.

[39 : 23] How can he be the Lord's representative if he is not going to fulfill that covenant himself? So the Lord said to Aaron, go into the wilderness to meet Moses, which he does.

Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses.

And he did the signs in the sight of the people and all the people. When they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

There is no longer any mention now of Zipporah and Moses' sons until chapter 18 when Jethro brings them back again. Therefore we must assume this is the point at which they part one from another.

But Moses and Aaron, they share this burden, they go into Egypt, and the people, just as God has prophesied, chapter 3, verse 18, they shall hearken to thy voice, and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and shalt say, the Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us, and so on.

[40 : 29] Now of course they don't always show the same willingness to submit. They don't always show the same diligence in obeying the voice of the Lord. But here, here is the first sign that the Lord at last is listening.

That somebody cares about their situation. That at last they have hope. And because they have hope, they are ready to listen. They are ready to bow.

They are ready to obey. Because I would suggest to you that that is one of the things that is most lacking in this world. Is the presence of hope for those who feel there's nowhere else to turn.

Those who feel they are enslaved. Those who feel they are enchained. Those who feel they have nowhere to turn. The Lord makes a way for them. The Lord opens a crack, the door of freedom, and the Lord gives hope.

There is hope in the Lord in a way that there is no hope in the land of Egypt. There is no hope in the forces or the powers of this world. There is hope when the Lord comes with his word of deliverance.

[41 : 39] And they bow their heads and worship. Friends, there is hope for us. Only in our deliverer, Christ Jesus. And there will be a long way to go in the wilderness.

And there will be much to suffer and much to endure and much to go through and much discipline to which we must submit. But there is hope when we look to the Lord and when we recognize that he has come specifically to redeem us.

That is why he has called us. That is why he has come. And let us let them bow our heads and worship. Let us pray. Let us pray.