

SM Moses returns to egypt

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[0 : 00] We're continuing our series in the book of Exodus, and today we're looking at verses 18 through 31.

So look with me there, Exodus 4, beginning in verse 18. Moses went back to Jethro, his father-in-law, and said to him, Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.

And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace. And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.

So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

And the Lord said to Moses, When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

[1 : 12] Then you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son. And I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.

At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me.

So he let him alone. It was then that she said, A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision. The Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.

So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak and all the signs that he had commanded him to do.

Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs and the sight of the people.

[2 : 21] And the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Let's pray together. Lord, again, we thank you for your word and pray that you would open it up to us now, that you would give us help in understanding it by your spirit's power, and that you'd be glorified in the preaching of it.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Today we look at Moses' return. We've seen Moses has fled Egypt. He spent time in Midian, 40 years there.

And now he's beginning to return to Egypt. Maybe you caught this, but the Hebrew word for return or go back is repeated five times in just the first three verses. So over and over again we see return, go back, return, go back.

It really becomes the theme of this section that we're looking at is Moses' return to Egypt. You may remember from our sermon last time that Moses tried to get out of the job.

[3 : 22] He didn't want to be the guy to go back or to lead Israel out of Egypt. But now here he is. He's returning to Egypt to accomplish that for which the Lord had called him.

As we read through the passage, I think there are three clear distinctions in the passage, which I've divided my sermon really into these three. The three points of my message are around.

We could call them geographical references. You may have called that the three divisions were we have Moses when he's still in Midian. He goes back and he speaks to his father-in-law.

We have Moses on the journey. And we have Moses as he returns or Moses in Egypt, this encounter with Aaron. It made logical sense to follow the pattern of the text, but that's not what I did. Instead, I want to start with really the end of our passage, what it says about his time in Egypt and Aaron. I really think it's the shortest one for us to deal with, and then we'll look at the other two. So first, in Egypt, the very end of our passage, verses 27 through 30, and Moses' encounter with Aaron.

[4 : 30] We see there the Lord said to Aaron, go into the wilderness to meet Moses. So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. So I said that Egypt, technically, here they are still in the wilderness, but Moses is now closer than he's been.

And he's encountering people from Egypt, namely Aaron, his brother. What we see here, Aaron's encounter with Moses went just as God said it would.

It's exactly what God said it would. And in my opinion, verses 27 through 30 are meant to affirm everything we saw in our last message. So maybe you were here, maybe you weren't, but as we looked at the beginning of chapter 4, what we saw is God calling Moses to go.

We'd seen already in chapter 3 that God had told Moses that the people would believe him about what God had said to him. And Moses, we saw, tried to get out of the job.

We looked at this last week. He didn't want to be the guy to go and speak to the Israelites. He says, what if they don't believe me? Or he says, I'm a bad speaker. And over and over again, God says, no, but they will believe you.

[5 : 38] He assures him. And finally, he gets to the point where God's anger is roused. And so Aaron's going to be that guy. And so what we see at the end is really the fulfillment of what we saw at the beginning of chapter 4.

God sent Aaron just as he said he would, that Aaron would come and meet him. Aaron spoke for Moses just as God said he would speak for Moses. Moses and the people believed and even worshiped God just as God said would happen.

And so I really think the last section is meant to communicate to us that God was faithful all along. Moses had no reason to doubt God. If we think of our message to the immediate audience, Moses is writing to those in the wilderness.

What does this say to them? Moses really confessing his sin? Then, I didn't believe God. And I tried to get out of the job. And God was angry at me.

But look, he did exactly what he said he would do. And so what does that say to the immediate audience? Those of you wandering in the wilderness, do what God says.

[6 : 45] If he says that he will defeat the nations in the promised land, believe him. Whatever he tells us to do, we can trust God and know that he will do what he says he will do.

And of course you know that they really followed Moses in sin. Many of them, the large majority of them, doubted God's promises. And so they end up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. But he's writing to them to tell them, don't make these mistakes. To believe God and know God to be faithful. If that's the message to the immediate audience, we understand that that's also a message for us, isn't it?

We see here God's doing exactly what he said he would do. They had no reason to doubt God. No reason to have Aaron come speak for Moses. All along, God was faithful and could be trusted.

So Moses should have believed God. And I think we're encouraged. The message to us is we can believe God. We can trust God. We can know him to be faithful. Our God is a faithful God.

[7 : 50] So first point, that's my whole point. I think that whole section is meant to communicate that message to us. And I really brought that forward from the end of the message forward to the beginning.

Just so that we could see that message and then dive deeper into some of the things that are maybe a little bit harder to understand. So now, going backwards in terms of the text and chronology, back to verses 18 through 23.

We see Moses and Midian and God's departing instructions for Moses. The first observation is from verse 19.

The Lord said to Moses and Midian, Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead. I would say the first point is really that God has appointed a time for Moses to return.

God is sovereign over this, and he has appointed, he's designated a time for Moses to return.

We've seen already that the time in Egypt was intended by God to be 400 years.

[8 : 56] He knew how long it would be exactly. And so, that time period is coming to an end. It's time for the fulfillment of what God had promised that they would be delivered from Egypt. And so, how does that come about?

Well, God appoints a time for Moses to return to bring that about to happen. But what's necessary? Well, God also appoints the time for men to die. He's appointed our lifespans.

And so, for Moses to be able to return, there's this necessity that his enemies no longer be there. Otherwise, they would have Moses arrested, they'd have him put to death.

But God tells him, All those who sought to kill you are now dead. We saw previously in chapter 2, verse 23, During those many days, the king of Egypt died, And the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.

Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And so, God providentially had been working before he's even telling Moses about what's happened. The Pharaoh who sought to kill Moses has died.

[10 : 05] And at the same time, or in this time period, The Pharaoh dies, and what happens with the Israelites? The weight of their bondage, their slavery, has either increased, Or they become more aware of it, And they cry out together to God that they would be rescued.

And God hears. And so, providentially, the prayers of God's people coincide with God taking the life of this king, Who sought to kill Moses. And so, we see God, as it were, behind the scenes, Working to bring about the Exodus, And to deliver God's people.

I've pointed you already to the connection between Moses and Jesus. Jesus is a greater Moses, a greater prophet. There's similarities in the life, And I see a similarity here with Jesus' return from Israel, Return to Israel from Egypt.

Listen to Matthew 2, 19-21. And remember, Jesus had fled. His parents took him out of Israel, Because Herod was seeking to kill him. We just read about this last Sunday evening in our Christmas service.

Maybe many of you read this this week at home. As you read through the Christmas account, Or the incarnation account there in the gospel. But you remember Herod was seeking to kill Jesus.

[11 : 26] And so, they're warned in a vision to leave Israel. They go to Egypt. Almost the reverse of what happens with Moses. But listen to Matthew 2, 19-21.

But when Herod died, Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Rise, take the child and his mother, And go to the land of Israel.

For those who sought the child's life are dead. And he rose, And he took the child and his mother, And went to the land of Israel. And so, we see really the reverse happen in Jesus' life.

But very similar. Those who sought to kill him are dead. He can now safely return. And so, we see God's providential care for both Moses and for Jesus In providing the way of salvation.

So, Moses is returning to Egypt. He's going to provide the salvation for the Israelites out of Egypt. Jesus' return to Israel will ultimately lead to Jesus' death And his salvation of all people through his return there.

[12 : 26] And so, again, very similar. But the death of his enemies was a sign that the time of the etzsis had come. God's appointed time was at hand. But to return to Egypt meant that Moses had to leave his family there in Midian.

Now, he takes his wife and his two sons at this point. We haven't heard about the birth of the second son. But we know his name and that he's been born. Eliezer. So, both of these sons are to be brought out.

But realize he left Jethro and the remaining family there. He had built a life there. He'd been there 40 years. And now God's calling him to leave all that he's established there in Midian To return back to Egypt.

In Luke 14, 26, Jesus says, Jesus is really recounting something very similar.

He calls us to take up our cross and follow him. And I pick really the harshest of all these things. We know there are other times where Jesus speaks of just leaving family behind. But here are hatred.

[13 : 44] I don't think, and remember we preached this, I don't think that Jesus is calling us to have hatred. There's a comparative value here. That we see God is of such great value that nothing's going to keep us from the task.

And that's not to discount the fact that, I imagine this was really hard for Moses. And maybe God's called us to leave family behind some of you in this room. To follow him.

Maybe he will yet call you to the missionary field or to some other endeavor that God's calling you to, to leave family behind. And it's never easy. But I want to encourage you that God will take care of you.

God will provide these things. God will give you strength to carry that cross. It's not in our own strength. But God who provides the strength for us to do that. But it's hard. Moses is to leave them. Moses even goes and he talks to his father-in-law and asks his father-in-law's permission. By this point, their lifestyles, the economy of the whole system was really jointly tied together.

[14:51] So that Moses is out, and what's his job? He's a shepherd with Jethro's sheep. She has to come back and say, Here's your sheep. And find a new shepherd. It's okay that I leave and take your daughter and your grandchildren away from you.

And Moses does leave and he takes with him his wife Zippor and their two sons, which we've seen Gershom already, and I've mentioned already, Eliezer, who previously had been unmentioned. We see that in verse 20.

He takes his two sons. Notice as well, his staff is called the staff of God, not because God had somehow given the staff or there was anything special about the staff, other than the fact that the miracles that Moses had seen before were worked by God through the staff.

And the later miracles are going to be worked through the staff for the deliverance of the Israelites. So God's somehow powerfully using this. There's nothing special about this. This isn't like a magical wand that Moses can just do whatever he wants to with his magic wand.

He can make things appear. God's going to use this for God's purposes. And so it's God. Think of, when we think of holiness, the things that God has set apart something.

[16:09] This staff has been set apart to God because God has used it powerfully and will continue to use it powerfully. Phil Reichen describes it as a visible sign of God's saving power.

And he goes on to note that, quote, now God's saving power comes to the cross. And so there, God's saving power is being manifested through a staff. But we, likewise, can think of the cross in this way.

It's not a magical wand we wave around. We can't just, boom, make things holy or save people by waving a cross over them. But it's a sign. It's a remembrance for us of God's salvation, how God will work.

So, too, was the staff. Last week we saw Moses was given three signs to show the Israelites, to prove that he was sent by God to lead them.

Now, he's to perform these same signs now, not just for the Israelites. He's to perform them for Pharaoh, as we see in verse 21. And interestingly enough, it's for the very opposite reason.

[17:10] He's given three signs to do for the Israelites so that they would believe that God had sent him. He's to do these same signs and even more signs for Pharaoh so that what will happen?

So that Pharaoh will not believe. So that Pharaoh's heart will be hardened. Now, I'm eager just to jump into the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

But we're going to have plenty of time to look at the hardening of Pharaoh's heart as we progress in the book. We see over and over again his heart is hardened. So I won't spend a lot of time to speak of this.

Let me just note right now that we speak of Jesus being the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He's over all kings and all authorities, all powers. We understand that God, the Father, is sovereign over all these powers.

And here we see the sovereignty of God demonstrated that the greatest ruler of the greatest empire of that day, God's sovereign over even his heart. And again, we'll have plenty of time to look at this, but let me say as well that God is also speaking to a reality of what's already happened in Pharaoh's heart.

[18:21] There's a condition in Pharaoh's heart that the natural response for Pharaoh to seeing God's power and working is a hardening, not a softening. Why?

Because his heart is already hard to the things of God. Maybe because of his polytheistic religion that he's not worshiping this God. This God's in opposition to him. And I think we have to understand the same is true for us.

I told you I wasn't getting into it. Now here I am a little bit getting into it. When we share the gospel to an unbelieving world around us, there will be one of two responses. Either God will work to soften the heart, to bring salvation, to take that heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh, or that natural

tendency that's in fallen man to oppose God will come to light and there will be a hardening. And the gospel has that power. It's like a sword that divides. And so, too, this working of a staff will do something similar to what the working of the cross does for many people in the gospel today. Now, there are multiple reasons why God hardens Pharaoh's heart or why Pharaoh's heart is hardened. Interestingly enough, as we will go through this, I told you I wasn't getting into it.

[19 : 38] As we go through it, we're going to see half the time it says Pharaoh hardened his heart, half the time it says God hardened his heart. Both are true. Responsibility of man, the sovereignty of God, both are happening at the same time.

But there are multiple reasons why that we will explore in the coming weeks. But listen to chapter 3, 19 through 20. So, there's two things, I think, going on.

Moses isn't really willing to let them go unless he's motivated by a very powerful hand. How's God going to manifest his power? Moses is going to refuse, and over and over again, the miracle is going to happen, and God's going to manifest his power.

We're going to see that in the coming weeks, Lord willing. And so, one part of it is that God may manifest his power.

Or maybe I should say one part of it is that Pharaoh will actually let them go, and that's not going to happen unless his heart is hardened to see these powerful miracles.

[20 : 49] But also, we're going to see God's glory is manifested to the whole world around them. And again, we're going to explore this more in the days ahead. But as his heart is hardened, God works these wonders and demonstrates himself to be God, even over the gods of the Egyptian empire.

Another interesting tidbit is that God calls his people Israel his firstborn son in verses 22 through 23. God's going to work these miracles.

God's going to bring the salvation of the Israelites from Egypt out of love for his children. What a beautiful picture that is. God's glory is at stake.

God's manifesting his power. He will be worshipped. He will be magnified. But that doesn't in any way discount the fact that God works out of love for his children.

Hosea 11.1 says, When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt, I called my son. It's God's love that motivates him.

[21 : 54] God moves him to work in this way to save his people Israel. And so, then we can conclude that the story of Exodus is the story of God's love for his son.

My firstborn son. My people. God says he loves them in such a way that he acts to save them. So, again, as we think of the big picture of what happens in God's word in salvation history, the essence is the story of God's love for his son.

And that salvation happened because God loved his son and moved to do so. God sends his only begotten son, the son whom he loves, to come to this earth and die that he may save his sons and daughters a second time.

A different salvation. A second salvation, as it were. A spiritual salvation. He works for the same reasons. Out of love. So, God desires their freedom so that they may serve him.

And here, too, we can learn. There's almost this competition that's going on between God and Pharaoh. And, again, I would say between the gods of the Egyptians and the true God, the God of gods.

[23 : 09] Who have the Israelites been serving? Pharaoh, right? They've been enslaved. They've been serving Pharaoh.

And God says, no more. You let them go free that they may serve instead me. My children have been serving you. Now my children should be free to serve me.

So there's almost a competition of masters. A worship competition. They're going to bow their knee to you no longer. So that they can now bow their knee to me. And I think as we see this description of them as sons.

His firstborn son. Right? We can't help but think of the gospel. We can't help but think of Jesus Christ. The son of God. Our hearts, our minds are drawn to thoughts of Christ.

Israel as a son felled. We're going to see this. Well, we won't get that far. But in the wilderness wanderings, we see their failure.

[24 : 21] In the entrance into the promised land, we see their failure. All throughout their history, we see the failure. We even see to the point of exile. The way that Israel is an adulterous people.

But God sent his own son, Jesus Christ, to be the true Israel. To die for our sins. Matthew 2.15 tells us that Jesus went to Egypt to fulfill what the Lord has spoken by the prophet.

Out of Egypt I called my son. So earlier I read to you, Hosea 11.1. Now I won't find it again.

Hosea 11.1. When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt I called my son. And what's that speaking of? There would not be a doubt in our mind, but it's speaking of the Exodus account here in the book of Exodus.

Out of Egypt. Out of Egypt I called my son. But Matthew tells us that that's the very reason that Jesus went to Egypt. So that it would fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

[25 : 33] Out of Egypt I called my son. What's it saying there? That Jesus is the new Israel. The true Israel. And that Hosea is speaking of what happened in the past, but he's also prophetically speaking of what would happen in the future when Jesus would go to Egypt and return from there.

That God would call that son, the true Israel, out of Egypt. And through Jesus the son, we are made sons and daughters.

And that ought to encourage us. Galatians 4, 4-7. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

And if a son, then an heir through God. Listen to the language there. So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

[26 : 46] And if a son, then an heir through God. And so just as God is working through his beloved son to save his son and bring him out of Egypt, out of bondage and out of slavery in Egypt, so too you, apart from Christ, are enslaved in bondage to sin and serving Satan.

But God sent his son that he might deliver us from bondage and slavery. He might free us, that we might no longer be slaves, but instead that we might be children.

Sons of God. Sons and daughters of God. And if a son, it says, then an heir through God. So we received an inheritance that belongs to the son, to Jesus Christ himself.

Why? Because we, through salvation, have been united to Jesus Christ, who is the son. We've been adopted. We've been made children of God. And then John 1, 11, 13.

Says he came to his own. That would be physical Israel. And his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.

[28 : 09] And so, though the nation of Israel here is called children of God, there's a greater reality to being a child of God. In fact, some of those who were children by birth reject him.

And so, he gives the right to become children of God to all who would believe in him. And so, if you're hearing this today, and you realize that you're in that slavery and in that bondage, how might you know freedom from bondage?

How might you become a child of God? Well, John 1 makes it very obvious, very clear. Previously, those in Israel did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. So, receiving Christ, believing in him, trusting in his name, makes you a child of God.

And I want to encourage you to do that today. Then, thirdly, my final point is to look at this last encounter on the road.

[29 : 15] On the way back from Midian to Egypt. It's in verses 24 through 26. I'll read that section again. I hope you all have been able to concentrate as we've gone through this.

Because I remember, when I just read through this, this passage struck me so strongly. I just, I lost everything else. What in the world is being spoken of here? I really want you to ask that question too.

Look at verse 24 through 26. Is anybody else going, what?

What in the world is that about? Just for a second, let me paint the picture. God says to Moses, all your enemies that sought to kill you are gone. So, go back to Egypt.

So, Moses, here he is. He's making his way back to Egypt. And God met him along the way.

Perhaps, as we saw before, maybe as the angel of the Lord. And we don't know how God sought to do this.

[30 : 42] But God meets him on the way. And he decides to kill Moses. So, all your enemies are gone except for God. And now he obeys God and God steps in to kill him anyway.

Right? What in the world is going on here? Why would God do this? Let me make it even harder. Humanly speaking, Moses is the instrument that God has raised up to bring about the Exodus. What happens if Moses is killed? Well, we know God's purposes will still be accomplished. But everything has been working toward this. What about the burning bush?

What about everything he's done to call Moses? And now you're going to kill Moses on the way? Why? Well, as your pastor, I would have loved if a little bit more detail was given.

I think there's meaning and purpose to this that I'm going to try to explain. And I hope it will become clear. But I would have loved God to spell this out a little bit more clearly. First, obviously from the passage, we know that Moses has not circumcised his son.

[31 : 52] Because Zipporah couldn't have circumcised him if he had already been circumcised. So the circumcision had not happened. And we know that that's the apparent issue.

Because when Zipporah does it, God's wrath is abated. God doesn't actually kill Moses. And let me be clear. I think this was a test.

Much like Abraham with Isaac. God's intention isn't ultimately to put Moses to death. But it's a test to see, will Moses be faithful? But the wrath of God is abated when the circumcision happens.

So the issue revolves around this circumcision. So why would that matter? Well, circumcision was the distinguishing mark of belonging to God's people and being part of the covenant community.

What defined if you were part of God's people was whether or not you'd been circumcised. This was part of the Abrahamic covenant. God had told them to circumcise the child on the eighth day.

[33 : 01] We're told specifically that this involves Gershom. I'm sorry, it says her son. So it's possible that it could have happened with Gershom.

But it could also be the second child that's been born. But either way, one or both, but the child has not been circumcised and especially not in accordance with what God had given in the Abrahamic covenant.

Let me just pause and say on a side note so that we understand how does that apply to us today? Because circumcision today is not the sign of being a part of God's people. Right? That's not what defines how you become a part of God's people.

God's word tells us that in the new covenant in Christ, the distinguishing mark is circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit. So circumcision of the flesh has been replaced by circumcision of the heart. God works to bring new life to the heart. And the public expression of that, again, that's not the sign itself, but the public expression of that is baptism. So baptism is not what makes us a part of the covenant community.

[34 : 10] It's an expression of the fact that we've been made a part of that community by Christ working in our heart. And so the sign of that new covenant now is still circumcision. But it's an internal circumcision done not with human hands, but with God's spirit.

Colossians 2, 11 through 12. In him also you are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

And then it goes on to say, having been buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. And so just so we understand why does this matter, understand that in the Old Testament, because of the Abrahamic covenant, the sign of belonging to God's people, at least externally, outwardly, is circumcision.

In the new covenant, something greater happens that Jeremiah 31 told us. No longer will we have to say to those in the covenant community, know the Lord. For they all know the Lord from the least of them to the greatest of them.

And for the greatest of them to the least of them. And so in the new covenant, the covenant community is made up only of believers. And the sign has been given by the Holy Spirit, the circumcision of the heart.

[35 : 27] And so understand that and say, what that means then is that Moses has disobeyed the Abrahamic covenant. He's going back to free God's people. He's going to lead them, be as it were, a spiritual leader for them.

And he hasn't even obeyed the Abrahamic covenant to identify his child as a part of this community. You're to lead my people, but you can't even lead your own family. That might be the practical

application for us.

You think the qualifications for an elder. An elder is disqualified if he doesn't lead his own family well. Moses, you're not leading your own family well. You haven't obeyed the Abrahamic covenant. And now you're expecting to go and lead my people. After the Exodus, when the Israelites celebrated the Passover, not the Passover of the angel of the Lord, but when they celebrate the first Passover feast, they're remembering that Passover.

But in the first celebration, every male was circumcised. We read that in Exodus 12, 43 through 49. So Moses is going to lead all the people into covenant obedience.

[36 : 37] Maybe it's been forgotten over the years. They haven't been obeying what Abraham had called or what God had called Abraham to do and his people to do. But Moses is going to lead them into covenant obedience in the future.

And he's going to lead his people. And yet it had not been leading his home. And so Zipporah actually does it, which means that we talked about already that it's possible, at least that Jethro was a priest of God, the true God.

And here we see her acting in faith in accordance to what God had committed to Abraham. So somehow she knew this. Either Moses had taught her or Jethro had taught her. But she performs the circumcision.

I don't want to get into great detail about this. She touches his feet. I have no clue what that means. And she proclaims that he is a bridegroom of blood to her. And so some people think that the touching of the feet means that she threw it down at his feet in anger, that she's mad and she proclaims in anger, you're a bridegroom of blood to me.

I've had to do this thing for you. It may not be that way. It may be some ceremonial touching of it to purify him. Either way, I think the symbolism of the blood is that there's a sacrifice to atone for sin.

[37 : 54] Moses is sinned in not doing it. He's touched by the blood. The blood covers him. It's pointing to a sacrifice to atone for sin. It's a type of the sacrifice to God to atone for Moses' sin and turn away the wrath of God, which in fact is what happens.

In Hebrews 9, 22 tells us, Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. So at this point, there's not death that happens, but the foreskin, the touching of Moses with blood, is to purify him and to atone for that sin.

Now, let me be the first to say, that is a strange story. And I know it's strange. And there's really no introduction. There's really, you think of writing style.

He jumps right into it. He jumps right out of it. No explanation given to us. It doesn't really flow with the text. It's a strange story. But remember, Moses is writing.

He's recounting this for those who are wandering in the wilderness, this early generation, but also God's Word's given for us. And so this strange story teaches us of our need to obey God and also our need for atoning sacrifice because none of us obeys perfectly.

[39 : 12] None of us can keep God's law perfectly, so all of us are in need of sacrifice. Listen to Romans 3, 23. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance, He had passed over former sins. And so I think we're encouraged.

Earlier we saw that we're in bondage to sin, we're in slavery, and that freedom comes through faith in Jesus Christ, that we, through faith in Christ, are made children of God.

And so here I think we're given just another aspect of the gospel. God has given His law. Can Moses keep the law? No. Can any of us keep God's law?

No. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And so where does that leave us? It says that we are justified by His grace as a gift. Our hope is in the gift of God's grace that He's given to us through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

[40 : 29] And so that's our only hope. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God's wrath, if it fell on Moses because He didn't do one thing, one act of obedience He failed to do, and God's ready to put him to death.

Where do you stand right now? How have you sinned before a holy God? We always, I mean, I think, almost always think of sin as disobedience to God's commands.

But do we realize as well that God has called us to certain things that we fail to do? God has called us to His worship, to love Him and to love our neighbor. Have we done that?

Should we be surprised that the wrath and anger of God would reside upon us? Where do we go? What hope is there for us that that wrath might be abated?

It's to Christ. It's to the sacrifice. It's to the blood. We are justified by His grace as a gift of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

[41 : 36] How? Whom God put forward as their propitiation, an atoning sacrifice, that by His blood, that it would be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness. And so God has put forward Jesus Christ as that atoning sacrifice. It's not a foreskin. It's not some dripping of blood.

It's Christ. It's His shed blood that washes us and makes us clean, that we might have God's wrath turned away from us, and that we might become children of God.

What a blessing that is for us. But I want to encourage you that all of us have to trust in the blood of Christ for atonement for sin. There is no other atonement for sin than the blood of Jesus Christ. May that be our hope.

This Christmas season, as we think of Jesus' coming, know that He came to die, that we might have that atonement. That the wrath of God may be turned away from us, that we might become children of God.

[42 : 34] Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for Christ. We thank You for His atoning sacrifice. That by His blood that we are washed, that we are made clean.

Lord, we pray that we would put our trust and hope in Him today. We thank You that we, in Christ, are freed from our slavery, our bondage to sin, and also that we have made Your children.

Lord, may we come to You as our Father in love. And we thank You for the love that was displayed in the cross. And pray that even now, as we sing our closing hymn, that we would do so in worship of You and of Your Son.

And we pray this in His name. Amen.