

# God's Firstborn Son

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are in a series in the book of Exodus, so please turn with me and your Bibles to Exodus chapter 4, verses 18 to 31. If you're not familiar with your Bibles, Exodus is the second book in the Bible, after Genesis, before Leviticus.

Chapter 4, verses 18 to 31. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Father, we gather once again under the reading and preaching of your Word.

Because of our conviction that every word of yours is truth, that all of Scripture is breathed out by you, and therefore profitable for us, and that it's able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Even passages that we don't expect to be like that. So we ask again that you will address us as you always do.

that you bring the conviction and comfort that only your Spirit can bring. And magnify the name of your Son, Jesus, in this Word.

[ 1 : 29 ] Lord, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please, follow along with me as I read Exodus 4, 18 to 31.

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 are 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.

[ 2 : 36 ] 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.

[ 3 : 45 ] Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.

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

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Some of us have worked with leaders who are gracious and flexible.

They seem to have an endless capacity for sacrificing themselves and bending to accommodate other people's preferences and opinions. But when that graciousness is taken to the extreme, if they never stand up for their rights and views, that's no longer being gracious and flexible.

That's being a pushover and a coward. It's hard to know what they actually think and what they actually want, which is very demotivating.

[ 4 : 59 ] On the other hand, we've also known leaders who are resolute and uncompromising about their standards. They are willing to endure much difficulty and push back from others to maintain their standards and accomplish their goals.

But when that resoluteness is taken to the extreme, it becomes stubbornness and tyranny. What we really want in the people we follow are those who combine both graciousness and resoluteness. People who can both accommodate us and challenge us. And God is the perfect embodiment of those two characteristics. He is exceedingly patient and gracious, but he is also unyieldingly holy and just.

And for that reason, he is worthy of both our love and affection and our fear and reverence. We learn in this passage that the Lord delivers his people from slavery by the blood of his firstborn son, that we might serve him as his children.

And in this account, we see the Lord's sovereignty and the Lord's holiness and the Lord's graciousness in turn. And I'll go through those in that order. So five times in this, in the preceding passage, Moses made some kind of excuse, if you remember, for why he could not obey God's command to go to Egypt to deliver God's people from slavery.

[ 6 : 34 ] But after God's repeated assurances of his presence and power that he would go with him, and God's patient and gracious accommodation of Moses' weaknesses, he finally ascends.

And that dialogue between God and Moses was long and detailed in the preceding passage in verses 18 to, but in this passage, in verses 18 to 31, the passage is characterized by short, punchy, action-packed sentences.

And it conveys the fact that Moses follows through on all the Lord's commands without delay. For example, Moses was commanded, go back to Egypt, chapter 3, verse 19.

And chapter 3, verse 20, I'm sorry, chapter 4, verse 19. In chapter 4, verse 20 tells us immediately that Moses went back to the land of Egypt. In chapter 4, verse 17, God commanded Moses, take in your hand this staff.

And verse 20 tells us that Moses took the staff of God in his hand. So he's obeying promptly everything God had commanded him to do. But that doesn't mean Moses now has zero doubt and is full of faith.

[ 7 : 38 ] Judging from verse 19, it seems that Moses is still worried that there are people in Egypt who are out to kill him. If you remember from chapter 2, we were told that when Pharaoh heard that Moses killed an Egyptian man, that he, Pharaoh, sought to kill Moses.

So Moses is worried that there's still a death warrant out for him, that there's a bounty on his head. Probably the reason why, after all these years, still hasn't gone back to Egypt. But God patiently assures him, go back to Egypt, for all the men who are seeking your life are dead.

But remember, now Moses has a new life in the Midian wilderness. He has a wife and he has children now. So before he takes his wife and kids out of the only country they have ever known and takes them to hostile territory in Egypt to rescue God's people, he first must receive his father-in-law's blessing.

You can imagine the nervousness as Moses approaches his father-in-law. And it says in verse 18, he said to Jethro, please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive. And Jethro, ever the supportive father-in-law he is, says go in peace. You might be wondering if this is kind of dishonest. Why didn't Moses say, the Lord, the God of my forefathers, has appeared to me in a burning bush and he told me of all people personally to go and deliver Israel from their slavery in Egypt.

[ 9 : 11 ] And by the way, I'm going to take Zippra, your daughter, and your grandkids with me. I mean, that's, imagine telling your father-in-law that.

That's a tough ask. But I don't think Moses is intentionally hiding the full truth here from Jethro, although that's certainly possible out of fear. The whole account is so abbreviated.

And likely there was a much longer conversation. And I think there's actually quite an appropriate reason why Moses says this, that, hey, please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.

Because that summary, that reason parallels chapter 2, verse 11, where it says this, Moses went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of

his people.

That word his people is literally his brothers. And the same word that's used here in chapter 4, verse 18. And so there's a pattern here. 40 years ago, Moses had gone out into Egypt to see his brothers.

[10:20] And that prompted him, after seeing his oppression, to want to try to deliver them by striking the Egyptian. And now again, Moses wants to go back to see his brothers in Egypt, to see what's going on with them.

The parallel suggests that Moses is revealing his desire to deliver his people once again from their oppression. 40 years ago, Moses failed. He was driven out of the country, with Pharaoh who was after him.

His own people rejected him as their prince. But this time, the story is going to be different. Because now the Lord goes with him. 40 years ago, Moses was rashly taking things into his own hands. But this time, he carries the staff of God in his hand, which will ensure that Israel is freed. And we see the Lord's total sovereignty in what he says to Moses in verse 21.

He says, The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a prominent motif throughout the Exodus account.

[11:41] And we're told that his heart was hardened no less than 18 times in a variety of ways. Majority of time, 11 times or so, it explicitly states that, as it does here, that the Lord was the agent of the hardening.

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. He says in Exodus 9, 12, But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh. Some other times, five times to be exact, the use of the divine passive construction implies that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

It implies that the Lord hardened his heart. So for example, Exodus 8, 19, it says Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Who was it hardened by? The implication is the Lord. That's the divine passive construction.

So that's what it says majority of the time, vast majority of the time. But there are still other times, three times total, when scripture says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. For example, it says in Exodus 9, 34, Pharaoh sinned yet again and hardened his heart.

So which is it? Is God responsible for hardening Pharaoh's heart or is Pharaoh responsible for hardening his own heart? The answer is yes.

[12:58] God is fully sovereign over all of Pharaoh's decisions. And yet, Pharaoh is truly responsible for all of his decisions.

Some of us are uncomfortable with the juxtaposition of those two realities, but the author of Exodus has no problem affirming both of those things side by side. In fact, the two seemingly contradictory statements sometimes occur in the same verse.

Earlier in Exodus 3, 19, the Lord said, I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. The word mighty or strong is the adjectival form of the Hebrew word, the verb that is used here in Exodus 4, 21.

I will harden, or literally, I will strengthen his heart. Meaning, he's going to strengthen his resolve, make him more stubborn so that he sticks to his word and refuses to let the Israelites go.

So there's a word play here. On the one hand, God will strengthen Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the people of Israel go. On the other hand, God will use his strong hand to compel Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.

[14:17] So, he is, in other words, playing both offense and defense. He is orchestrating even Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to reveal, in order to reveal his glory and power.

That's why God raised up Pharaoh for this particular time. He says in Exodus 9, 16, for this purpose, I have raised you up, Pharaoh, to show you my power so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

That's God's purpose. One of my favorite movies of all time is Life is Beautiful. I don't know if you guys have seen that. It's incredibly, in the movie, the main actor, the Italian actor, Roberto Benigni, he stars in it as the lead actor, but he's also the same guy who wrote the script and directed the film. So, he's the writer, the director, and the lead actor in the film. What's happening here in Exodus is quite similar. God is the writer, he is the director, and the principal actor of Israel's Exodus from Egypt.

And what's the point of that? So that in the end, when the credit rolls, God receives all of the glory. This is a hard doctrine for us because the values of liberty and independence and

self-determination are so deeply ingrained in our culture.

[15:53] I mean, the state motto of our upstairs neighbors is live free or die. Right? And you might not know this, but the Massachusetts state motto is not as well known because it's in Latin, but when you translate it, it's actually quite similar.

It says, by the word, well, I mean, by the sword, we seek peace, but peace only under liberty. That's our motto. So, we're so used to this illusion of control over our lives, and we're so used to seeing ourselves as the protagonists of the story of our lives, that it's very hard for us to accept the reality that we are not actually in control over our lives, and that God is actually in full control over our lives.

Indeed, he is in full control over all of human history and of the entire universe. It's hard for us in a man-centered world to accept a God who is truly sovereign.

The apostle Paul understood this well after citing the book of Exodus and mentioning how God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to show forth his power.

Paul writes that God has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. And then he anticipates the objection. Well, you will say to me then, why does he still find fault?

[17:19] For who can resist his will? In other words, if God hardened Pharaoh's heart, then how can he also blame Pharaoh? Pharaoh is helpless to resist God's will.

I'm sure some of you, like me, have raised similar objections to God in the past. And here's how the word of God answers that objection in Romans 9, 20 to 23. But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder, why have you made me like this? Has a potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory?

The Bible doesn't try to explain away the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. It simply says, who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

[18:28] When you crochet a scarf, does the scarf talk back to you and say, I want to be a blanket instead? When the comic book writer Jim Starlin created the character Thanos to be a villain in the Marvel Universe, does Thanos talk back to the author and say, hey, I actually want to be a hero.

Thank you very much. Doesn't make any sense. God created us from scratch.

He sovereignly orchestrated our backgrounds, our relationships, our experiences. He gave us all of our talents and tendencies and temperaments and he did all of this for his glory.

That's his ultimate purpose. That's what it means to be God, the Lord, Yahweh. I am who I am. I will be who I will be.

He is by the very definition of God's sovereign. Nevertheless, God's sovereignty does not erase human responsibility. Though God is fully sovereign, Pharaoh really is culpable.

[19:54] He is responsible for hardening his own heart and refusing to let the Israelites go. And this tension in Scripture is not a riddle to be solved but a truth to believe and to live by.

Because we are responsible for our actions and culpable for our sins, we do our best to discern God's will and try to obey him. But because God is sovereign, we trust him and rest in him even when tyrannical kings reign.

Even when our lives are out of control. Life doesn't make sense or work as God intended if we resolve this tension one way or another, if we don't maintain the tension.

By telling Moses ahead of time that he will harden Pharaoh's heart, God is preparing Moses for Pharaoh's stubborn resistance. Don't be surprised, Moses. Don't despair, Moses.

Pharaoh's resistance is all part of my plan. Even when you experience the most devastating setback of your career or of your relationship or in your health, even when life is not going according to plan, even when you're facing great hardship or suffering in your life, you can find comfort in knowing the fact that nothing happens outside of God's sovereign purposes, outside of the loving hands of our heavenly Father.

[21:23] That's the Lord's sovereignty. And then we see the Lord's holiness and his justice in verses 22 to 26. God instructs Moses to say this 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.

The nation of Israel, as Yahweh's chosen people, and his special possession is his firstborn son.

Having a child heightens the protective instincts in fathers and mothers.

And those who seek to harm a child incur the fierce anger of the parent. Not many of you guys know who this person is probably.

Last month, Cain Velasquez, a former UFC heavyweight champion, was arrested on murder charges because he was chasing and shooting with a gun a man who allegedly molested his four-year-old son repeatedly at a daycare.

[ 22 : 39 ] Obviously, he should not have taken justice into his own hands. That was a presumptuous and unwise decision. But it's not hard to understand the man's paternal rage.

In a similar way, the Lord God is getting very personal here. Israel is my firstborn son.

And I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me. And if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.

This is justice. This is a preview of the tenth and final disaster that the Lord inflicts on Egypt for Pharaoh's refusal to let Israel go. All the firstborn sons of Egypt will die in chapter 11 and 12.

When announcing Israel's impending exile to Assyria due to their sinful rebellion against him, the Lord says this in Hosea 11, 1-4.

[ 23 : 45 ] When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt, I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away. They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bends of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws.

And I bent down to them and fed them. This is how God relates to his people. As his son, you can sense both his intense affection and heartache in that passage because of the rebellion of his son Israel.

The Lord called him and taught him and brought him out of their slavery in Egypt. He taught his son to walk. He took his son by his arms and healed him.

He led his son with cords of kindness and bent down to feed him. And yet, his son repeatedly rejected him, rebelled against him, and went after idols.

[ 25 : 03 ] And Matthew 2.15 cites this passage to say that Jesus' sojourn in Egypt is a fulfillment of Hosea 11.1, out of Egypt I called my son.

Matthew is making the connection that Jesus is the new Israel, the true son of God who was called out of Egypt to deliver his people.

That means, if you are a child of God, if you have repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus, then in Christ, you are God's son.

In Christ, you are among God's people. You're a member of his family. That means, the Lord God, the Almighty God, cares for you and protects you with the same zeal that a loving father has for his child.

You are not a helpless, fatherless child. The Lord's mighty hand, your Father in heaven, he is watching over you.

[ 26 : 16 ] This truth must be such a comfort to believers in parts of the world where Christians face severe persecution for their faith. Right now is the time of God's patience with evildoers, but the Lord will return in vengeance and he will vindicate his holiness and he will execute his justice.

However, the Lord's holiness is seen not only in his dealings with the enemies of his people, but also in his dealings with his own people. He says in verses 24 to 26, at a lodging place on the way, the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.

Did you expect that? 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. This is one of the most challenging passages of scripture to interpret. Just to give you one example, one Old Testament scholar, David Pinchensky, just despairs of interpreting it all together and this is what he says, quote, biblical scholars love this passage because it is totally incomprehensible.

That's clearly an overstatement. It's funny nonetheless. The reason why it's so difficult to interpret is that it seems to come out of nowhere and it uses a whole bunch of personal pronouns without making it clear who it's referring to.

[ 27 : 54 ] Why would the Lord commission Moses for this task and then seek to put him to death before he can fulfill it? Who is the son that Zipporah circumcised?

And who is the him that the Lord met and tried to kill? Even in verse 25 where it says Zipporah cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feed with it.

If you look at the footnote there on the word Moses, it tells you in Hebrew it just says him. It doesn't say Moses. It's most likely Moses.

That's why the translator is trying to help us by putting that in there. So we can't be certain that this is what the passage definitively means but here's my best attempt to make sense of it all.

Exodus 4 verse 20 is the first time in the book when we are told that Moses had sons in the plural. We are only told of the birth of his firstborn Gershom in chapter 2.

[ 28 : 49 ] So now we know that Moses had another son before his return to Egypt. And later in Exodus 18 verse 4 we find out the name of this second son and his name is Eliezer and it tells us the meaning of his name there and the meaning is this.

The God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. Interesting. He named him that before the Exodus.

So he is referring to God delivering him from the sword of Pharaoh who was trying to kill him. So that helps us that helps to make sense of chapter 4 verse 19 because when God tells Moses seemingly out of the blue that all the men who are seeking your life in Egypt are dead, Moses probably named his second son Eliezer after that assurance that Pharaoh is dead and his men are dead who are trying to kill him.

So then Eliezer was likely born around this time and his name prophetically anticipates God's deliverance of Israel from the new Pharaoh's sword as well just as Moses is about to return to Egypt.

So then according to Genesis chapter 17 verse 10 to 14 that's where God makes his covenant with Abraham and he commands circumcision as a sign of the covenant and this is what it says this is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your offspring after you.

[ 30 : 14 ] Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins and he shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant.

Circumcision marked Israel as God's special possession his chosen people. It was the sign of the covenant relationship that they have with the Lord in the same way that in the new covenant nowadays for us baptism and the Lord's supper function as signs of the covenant that we are included among his people.

The failure to observe God's covenant stipulations meant being cut off from his people meaning they'd be excluded from God's people and circumcision the cutting off of the foreskin was a very visual representation of that curse of being cut off you and your progeny your future generations will literally be cut off from God's people.

That's what that sign symbolizes, represents. And so this is my best reconstruction of the event. Moses' second son Eliezer was born around this time.

[ 31 : 37 ] Moses was about to take leave of his father-in-law to return to Egypt. The eighth day when Eliezer should have been circumcised had come and gone but Moses still had not circumcised him and he was liable to judgment because it was his responsibility to circumcise his son.

So as Moses and his family are journeying to Egypt at a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. This is very similar to what happens in Numbers 22 when Balaam is expressly permitted by God to go meet Balak but then later on when he's on his way he says the angel of the Lord came out to oppose him because his way was perverse before him.

We don't know exactly what's going on here but the Lord unmistakably appeared to Moses and Zipporah and he made it clear that he was there to oppose Moses and kill him and maybe Moses suddenly fell ill maybe he is confronted like Jacob was confronted by the angel of the Lord and

wrestled with him all night long.

Apparently whatever the case was Zipporah knew immediately what the issue was. She wastes no time and takes a flint a hard sharp stone and then cuts off her son's foreskin and touches Moses' feet with it.

The fact that Zipporah knew exactly what to do shows that she and Moses has probably had conversations about this issue. The fact that only one son is circumcised here shows that the other one was already circumcised.

[ 33 : 09 ] So maybe Moses circumcised Gershom according to the custom of his fathers since he was born not long after Moses left Egypt and started sojourning in Midian.

And since Moses named his son Gershom after a prominent member of the tribe of Levi it's clear that he was aware of his Jewish heritage despite the fact that he was educated in the court of Pharaoh.

However with his second son Moses had not followed through. Maybe Moses had assimilated Midianite customs by then or perhaps he had an argument with Zipporah over whether or not to circumcise his son Eliezer.

Whatever the case Zipporah knew that the lack of circumcision was the reason for the Lord's opposition. And when she cut off the son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it feet is likely euphemism for Moses' genitals it says that the Lord let him alone.

Just as previously he was rescued rescued by Hebrew midwife Shipporah and Puah and then he was rescued by his mother and sister and then he was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter from out of the river Moses is once again saved by the timely intervention of a woman this time by his wife Zipporah.

[ 34 : 29 ] If Moses is to lead the nation of Israel and call them to keep their covenant with the Lord then he must first ensure that his own household is keeping their covenant with the Lord.

Similarly 1 Timothy 3 4-5 says that elders who govern the household of God the church must first demonstrate that they can manage their own households well. Neglecting to circumcise his son was a grave failure on Moses' part because it signified that his own family is cut off from the people of God that he has the people of God the very people that he has been called and commanded to rescue.

How is Moses to enjoin Israel to take the covenant of God seriously if he himself has failed to set an example by doing so?

God is holy and he takes obedience seriously. He is no chummy old body that you can push around and presume upon.

God is to God to practice church discipline. When someone who claims to be a Christian engages in demonstrable destructive sin and refuses to repent the church excommunicates that member and bars him from partaking of the Lord's Supper in order to communicate the spiritual reality that he has been cut off from God's people.

[ 36 : 09 ] That he may not partake in the family supper. This is not to say that Christians are perfect. We all sin in numerous ways.

But the hallmark of the Christian is that we repent of our sins and we turn to Jesus for forgiveness in faith. A purported Christian's refusal to repent brings disrepute to the church and undermines our gospel witness.

And we must uphold the holiness of God as a church. I used this illustration about a year ago when we were in Acts chapter 4 but it's very relevant for today's passage.

In C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, Susan, I think, is having a conversation with Mr. Beaver about the prospect of meeting Aslan who is the lion that resembles God in this fictional series.

And Mr. Beaver says, Aslan is a lion, the lion, the great lion. Oh, says Susan, I thought he was a man.

[ 37 : 20 ] Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion. Safe, says Mr. Beaver. Who said anything about safe?

Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you. Not safe.

God's not tame. He's good. And he will fiercely defend his holiness and justice.

But we can rest assured that he is also gracious to us and merciful to us. And how does this passage demonstrate the Lord's graciousness?

In a number of ways. First, notice the parallel between verse 19 and 24. It says in verse 24 that the Lord sought to put Moses to death, which is similar to how verse 19 describes the men who are seeking Moses' life.

[ 38 : 24 ] And that echoes Exodus 2.15 where he said Pharaoh sought to kill Moses. Seeking communicates intent. Pharaoh is only a man. He's not all-knowing and he can only be in one place at a time.

He has no idea where Moses is, so he needs to first look for him and find him before he can kill him. So Pharaoh seeks to kill him. But God is different. He is all-knowing and he is omnipresent. He is everywhere at the same time and he is all-powerful. And it says the Lord met Moses. God didn't need any time.

God could have killed Moses in that instant. He didn't need to seek to kill him. But instead God communicates his intent to Moses and Zipporah.

He gives them time to repent. And when Moses and Zipporah do repent, he mercifully relents. we see God's graciousness in another way.

[ 39 : 27 ] The words son and firstborn son are repeated throughout this passage. God says Israel is his firstborn son. And he says to Pharaoh, let my son go. And if you don't, I will kill your firstborn son.

And this is immediately followed by Zipporah circumcising her and Moses' son. Not coincidentally, the death of Egypt's firstborn sons in chapter 12 is immediately followed by God requiring circumcision as a precondition for partaking in the Passover sacrifice.

He says in chapter 13, and immediately after that, God commands Moses in chapter 13, consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.

Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, what does this mean? You shall say to him, by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery.

For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first opened the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.

[ 40 : 50 ] The firstborn male animals had to be sacrificed in commemoration of the Passover when God judged the firstborn sons of Israel, but passed over the sons of Israel.

And all the firstborn sons, humans, had to be redeemed with payment to signify that they belong to the Lord. They don't belong to the parents, they belong to the Lord.

So then the ritual of circumcision is intimately tied to the observance of the Passover, which is then connected to the significance of the firstborn son. And I think this is the reason why Moses leaves the pronouns in this passage ambiguous and doesn't clarify whether it's Gershom or Eliezer that is circumcised.

If I'm correct in thinking that it was Eliezer that was his second son that was circumcised, then by not specifying that the fact that it was the second son and leaving it ambiguous, Moses makes it easier for us to make the literary and theological connection between circumcision and the redemption of the firstborn son during Passover.

And this is where we see the amazing grace of God. The only reason why the firstborn sons of Israel were spared during that tenth disaster was that they followed the Lord's instruction to sacrifice an unblemished one-year-old male lamb and daub its blood on the lintel and the side posts of their door frames.

[ 42 : 19 ] And this sacrificial lamb pointed to Jesus, the firstborn son of God who would die as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

That's why John 1 29 says, Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. 1 Corinthians 5 7 says, Christ is the Passover lamb who has been sacrificed. sacrificed. It's because Jesus, the firstborn, died in our place that we, God's people, are saved and called his firstborn son in Christ.

We, all of us, like Moses and like Israel, have failed to keep our end of the covenant with God. We've been unfaithful to him. We have sinned against him.

And if the Lord had met us in our sin, he would have met us in judgment. to put us to death. But the blood of the son of God atoned for our sin.

And because of Jesus, instead of being caught off from God's people, we can now come to the table of the Lord, be adopted into his family, and call upon God as our father.

[ 43 : 36 ] What should be our response to such mercy? we see it in verses 27 to 31. In the preceding passage, God had graciously accommodated Moses' weakness by promising to send Aaron to him to be a spokesperson for him because Moses was not a good speaker.

And that promise is fulfilled here when Aaron meets Moses at the mountain of God and begins to serve as his mouthpiece. And then when they go to Egypt and gather the elders of Israel and they speak all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and do all the signs that the Lord had given them, he says in verse 31, the people believed.

And that too is a fulfillment of the Lord's promise from earlier on. Remember when Moses protested in chapter 4 verse 1 saying, they will not believe me or listen to my voice.

But God had promised Moses in chapter 3 verse 18, they will listen to your voice. And once again, it's the word of the Lord and not the voice of Moses doubts that proves true.

The people believed and that should be our response too. When you hear the good news of Jesus Christ preached, if you're not a follower of Christ, you should believe.

[ 44 : 51 ] Entrust yourself to the Lord. And it says in verse 31, 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.

That is the appropriate human response to God's compassion and salvation. We are not alone. We are not fatherless.

God has seen our affliction. He has visited us in Christ and we ought to worship him. That's why the Lord God saves us.

Remember what the Lord told Moses to say to Pharaoh in verse 23, let my son go that he may serve me. The word serve is sometimes also translated as worship.

We have been redeemed from our slavery to sin that we might serve and worship the Lord. God does not free us from slavery to sin for the sake of freedom itself.

[ 45 : 56 ] God does not serve us. He frees us for himself so that instead of being slaves of Pharaoh, instead of being slaves of any other idols of our world for that matter, whether it's money, success, fame, lust, the approval of man, that we might instead be slaves of Christ.

Sin always enslaves us. We delude ourselves into thinking that we can enjoy sin here and there in a controlled manner, at our convenience, but sin instead controls us and masters us and leads us ineluctably to death.

True freedom for man, for humanity, is found only in servitude to God. It is only in the arms of our heavenly father that we are truly known and loved.

It is only at the table of our father's home that we are truly fed and satisfied. It's only in the service and worship of our father that we fulfill our eternal creation purpose.

Let's pray together. Lord, Lord, we worship you.

[ 47 : 26 ] We stand in awe of you. We tremble before you because you are holy, because you are sovereign.

but Lord, we also love you. We love you more than anyone else in the whole world.

We love you with our whole heart. We lay down our lives before you. We dedicate, we devote all of our lives to you.

because you are a gracious God. Because you are our father. Because you loved us first.

Because you gave your son for us. God, help us to believe these truths and live in obedience by them for your glory.

[ 48 : 40 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.