

Wayside Bible Chapel

Sermon Notes: August 18, 2024

Text: Exodus 4:18-31

Title: Off to Egypt - *The Exodus Begins*

Slide No.	Notes
	Read the text: Exodus 4:18-31
	Prayer
	<p>Background:</p> <p>When we last met Moses, God met him in a burning bush, and called him into the ministry of the Exodus...to rescue God's chosen people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt.</p> <p>After being born a Hebrew in Egypt at a time when his people were slaves, and when Pharaoh had decreed all male Hebrew children were to be cast into the Nile and be drowned. The baby Moses was miraculously preserved and raised in Pharaoh's household with his own mother as his nursemaid.</p> <p>There are all kinds of Children's Story Bibles available with cute cartoon illustrations that depict the story of Moses in the reed basket. However, there are no such illustrated Children's Books available for the text we just read this morning. Today's text is an adult passage. It is also a difficult passage, and because we practice Expository preaching, unpacking the scriptures verse-by-verse, we will move carefully through this passage and try to learn how it applies to how we live our Christian life today.</p> <p>So, again, by way of background, Moses spent the first 40 years of his life growing up as a Hebrew in Pharaoh's palace, where, as Stephen tells us in Acts 7 that "<i>Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians</i>" Acts 7:22. Then one day, Moses left the palace and walked among his people, the children of Israel. He witnessed the cruelty the Egyptian slave masters imparted on the Hebrew slaves.</p> <p>Moses took matters into his own hands, and without first seeking God's guidance, he sought justice for his people by killing the Egyptian oppressor.</p> <p>When Moses learned that his act of murder was not done in secret, but instead, known by others; he fled Egypt and went to Midian, where he herded sheep in the desert for the next 40 years.</p> <p>Then one day, Moses was tending his flock near Mt. Horeb, and he encountered God in a burning bush. God told Moses that he intended to use Moses as his means of delivering his people out of the hand of the Egyptians.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>Moses resisted the call of God. He used every excuse he could think of, but ultimately obeyed. God made the shepherd's staff that Moses carried into a special demonstration of the authority and power God had granted to Moses. God also provided Moses' brother to go with Moses to speak to the people and confront Pharaoh. Aaron would be God and Moses's mouthpiece.</p> <p>After the burning bush encounter, Moses begins his journey from Midian back to Egypt, and that is where we begin in today's text:</p>
1	<p>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." ¹⁹ And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." ²⁰ 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.</p>
	<p>Let's first understand who the people are that have been identified in this passage:</p> <p>Jethro: Exodus 2:16 tells us that Jethro (who is also called "Reuel") is a Priest of Midian. His seven daughters encounter Moses when he first comes to Midian. The daughters are trying to water their father's flock, but local shepherds are prohibiting them from completing the task. Moses intervenes, drives the shepherds away and waters the flock for the daughters of Jethro.</p> <p>When Jethro hears of the incident, he asks Moses to dine with them. Ultimately, Moses is content to dwell with Jethro's family, and marries one of his daughters. For the past 40 years, Moses has been serving Jethro and tending his sheep in the land of Midian.</p> <p>The land of Midian is not Egypt. Scripture tells us that Jethro is a priest of Midian, so he practices a religion that different than the Egyptian religion and also is not the Hebrew religion. Just park that idea for a bit.</p> <p>Today's passage tells us that Moses seeks Jethro's permission to leave Midian and go to Egypt. Jethro bids him to "Go in Peace", and does not figure directly into the rest of this passage</p> <p>Moses leaves Midian with his wife and his sons. We have to look elsewhere in scripture for more information on who these people are.</p> <p>Zipporah: Is one of Jethro's seven daughters. Exodus 2:21 tells us she marries Moses. So, Moses's wife is Zipporah. She is a Midianite.</p> <p>There are also the sons of Moses mentioned in this passage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many sons did Moses have? <p>Exodus 2:22 tells us that Moses' firstborn son, born in Midian, was named Gershom, which means "sojourner". Moses chose that name for his son because Moses was a sojourner in a foreign land.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>We must read later in Genesis to find out that Moses and Zipporah had two sons.</p> <p>In Exodus 18:4, we learn that Moses's second son was named Eliezer.</p> <p>So, the family gets Jethro's blessing to leave Midian and go to Egypt.</p> <p>There is Moses, his wife, Zipporah and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.</p> <p>In my mind, as I imagine this scene in my head, there is a song playing in the background: <i>"We're off to see the Pharaoh...."</i></p> <p>The Bible tells us that Moses left Midian, with his family riding on a donkey and him walking beside with the Staff of God in his hand.</p> <p>The next thing we would expect to read is about Moses arriving in Egypt. In literary form, it appears to be the conclusion of the commissioning of Moses that occurred at the burning bush.</p> <p>Then there is more. It is an elaboration by God of what he has already said at the burning bush encounter: Let's read verses 21-23:</p>
2	<p><i>21 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. 22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, 23 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.'"</i></p>
	<p>God reminds Moses to do all of the miracles in front of Pharaoh that God had put in his power. ("Use the staff, Moses"). God also tells Moses that Pharaoh will not respond to the miracles. Here it tells us that God will harden Pharaoh's heart. It later passages in Exodus, scripture tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.</p>
	<p>There is a whole sermon waiting in that expression, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" about God's Sovereign Will and Providence and how it relates to our conscious will to make decisions about life. But, we are not going to go there this morning. We will take that topic up in more detail in a future Exodus sermon, when the text deals with the topic in more detail.</p> <p>And there is one more thing God says to Moses that may turn out to be more important than we initially recognize: <i>22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, 23 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.'"</i></p> <p>There is a first-born son issue here</p> <p>If you are at all familiar with the Exodus story, you know the reference God is making. In the final plague of judgment over Egypt, God will decree the death of the first-born sons of Egypt and the salvation of the Hebrew first-born sons, along with the salvation of all of Israel at the Passover.</p> <p>Note that in this passage, God refers to all of Israel as his first-born son.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>There is a relationship here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a promise to Israel: God is going to rescue his first-born son. • There is a threat to Pharaoh: If Pharaoh hardens his heart, and does not let God's people go, God will kill the first-born sons of Egypt. <p>This is a very dire warning. It is also very intimate. Don't skip over God referring to Israel as his first-born son. Don't pass over the horror of the threat that if Pharaoh will not relent, God will kill his first-born son.</p> <p>But there is someone else in this passage who also has a first born son...Moses.</p>
	<p>And that brings us to Exodus Chapter 4, Verses 24-26. This next part of today's passage is some of the most difficult and challenging parts of scripture found in the Bible. But, this text is in the Bible, and here at Wayside, we go through scripture verse-by-verse, so today we are going to take on this next passage.</p> <p>When I am asked to prepare a sermon, one of the things I must do is come up with a title for the sermon that Thomas can put on a slide at the start of the service.</p> <p>As I read this passage, and considered what it means and asked question after question, the answer was always "I don't know!" So, I thought "<i>I Don't Know!</i>" might be a good sermon title.</p> <p>If this passage has puzzled you, perhaps it comes as a relief to know that it has also perplexed many Bible Scholars. One of the references I used in preparation was John MacArthur's Bible Study on Exodus. It wasn't very helpful, he just omitted it from the Bible Study materials.</p>
	<p>But it is clear what this passage is about. It's about circumcision</p> <p>What about circumcision? <i>I don't know!</i> But we will see if we can figure it out.</p> <p>We will do three things as we examine this text:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will examine the difficulties of this text. There are many. 2. We will look at the most plausible explanations of the text, in light of the many difficulties. 3. Finally, we will consider the implications of the text. <p>First let's read Exodus 4: 24-26 the way we find it here in the ESV Translation:</p>
3	<p>²⁴ At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵ 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!" ²⁶ So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.</p>
	<p>Amen. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. That's the Text.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>Let's deal with the questions first, because there are questions at every turn in these two verses.</p> <p>Question #1: <i>Who is "him?"</i></p> <p>That's the first question, "Who is him?" Verse 24: <i>At a lodging place on the way the LORD met <u>him</u>...</i></p> <p>Could it be Moses?</p> <p>That is the most common answer we find among commentators. Why do they give this answer? The text does not identify who "Him" is, and there are three possibilities: Moses, Gershom or Eliezer. However, in fact, these two verses do not have Moses's name in them anywhere. In verse 25, the ESV states that Zipporah touches the foreskin to Moses' feet, but if you look closely, there is a note (1) after the word "Moses" and the note tells you the original Hebrew text was written "His feet", and does not specifically name Moses, so this was an assumption by the translators.</p> <p>Why do the translators feel comfortable making that assumption?</p> <p>First, people assume, that if it's not Moses, where is he? This is a journey from Midian back to Egypt. If the "Him" is not Moses, then where is Moses?</p> <p>Second, why wouldn't Moses be the one to circumcise his son? He's the Hebrew. He's the Father. Why would he not circumcise his son? The answer might lie in the next part of the verse: <i>the LORD met <u>him</u> and sought to put <u>him</u> to death.</i></p> <p>Who is the second "Him?", and how does God "seek" to put someone to death. God is omnipotent. If he wants you dead, you are dead.</p>
	<p>Therefore, the idea is that God is bringing the "him" in this passage to a point very near death to prove a point, and that is why Moses cannot perform the circumcision, because he is incapacitated at the time.</p> <p>Third: the phrase "Bridegroom of Blood" seems to point to Moses since he is the only "Bridegroom" in the family group. The term "Bridegroom of Blood" is not found anywhere else in scripture. It is uniquely used here. It is also something that is not easily translated, and using the words "Bridegroom of Blood", as it turns out, of all the possible translations, is not the one that makes this passage the clearest.</p> <p>But, for those three reasons, many theologians believe the "him" in this passage is Moses. If you take that view, you could read this passage like this: <i>"At a lodging place along the way, God met Moses and sought to put Moses to death"</i></p> <p>However, the text does not clearly state that, and we can't say it for certain.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>Another possibility: Is it Moses' son? It could be.</p> <p>One commentator writes: <i>"Since Zipporah touched Moses' feet with the blood of the foreskin, it is assumed that Moses is the one that God was seeking to kill...But in the original Hebrew, the text simply reads that Zipporah touched "his" feet. The original text does not mention Moses. Therefore, it can be argued that Zipporah actually touched the blood of the foreskin to her son's feet."</i></p> <p>So, if one takes this approach to assume it is not Moses, but his son who gets touched, then the question is, <i>"Which son?"</i></p> <p>Is it Eliezer, the younger son? We can say with some confidence that it is not the younger son who is the "him" God is seeking to put to death. No commentators take that approach.</p> <p>There are, however, some commentators who make a case that the "him" being circumcised is the younger son. They argue that if Zipporah only circumcised one son, then the other son must have already been circumcised, meaning the older son had already been circumcised on the 8th day, in accordance with the Law.</p> <p>The only problem is that the text doesn't say that. We can't come to that conclusion solely on the basis of the text.</p> <p>Was it Gershom, the oldest son? It could be.</p> <p>Why would some Theologians argue that the "him" God was seeking to put to death was Gershom? Here's why it would make sense:</p> <p>In the two verses immediately before this passage, God says to Moses: ²²Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ 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.'"</p>
	<p>God is predicting the future of the 10th plague. So, in context, God just talked to Moses about the death of the first-born which is going to pass over the Israelites, why?</p> <p>Because the Israelites are marked as God's people. And because they are marked as God's people, the blood of the Passover Lamb will be placed on the doorposts of their houses, therefore the death of the firstborn will Passover the children of Israel</p> <p>Gershom is Moses' firstborn son, and he is not circumcised, which also means he is not identified with the people of God. So, on the way to an encounter with Pharaoh that will eventually lead to the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, God seeks to kill Moses' firstborn son, because Moses has not been obedient to mark him out as a Hebrew.</p> <p><u>That makes sense.</u></p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>But the text doesn't say it...It makes sense. It fits. But the text doesn't say it. So, we can't say it with certainty. We can't say it with confidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be wary of people who are confident and have all the answers about things like this. • When there are things in the Bible that are clear, we should preach them and we should preach them hard. • We should make no apologies about preaching them hard, because they are clear. • But when the Bible is not clear, we had better hold our opinions loosely, be open to other interpretations and be careful about being dogmatic. <p>So it makes sense that the first two "hims" are Gershom. We could read this passage like this: <i>"At a lodging place along the way, God met Gershom and sought to put Gershom to death"</i></p> <p>However, the text does not clearly state that, and we can't say it for certain.</p>
	<p>Second Question: <u>Why</u> is God trying to kill "Him"? (Whomever Him is)</p> <p>First of all, we don't know for certain who "him" is. Secondly, why is God seeking to put "him" to death? <i>At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.</i></p> <p>For the theologians who believe the him is Moses, the why is in the explanation we shared earlier. God is afflicting Moses to get his attention and prove a point. Up until now, the text has been all about Moses and God.</p> <p>God has commissioned Moses, and it is possible he wants to get his full attention and complete obedience.</p> <p>Many Bible Scholars come to this conclusion, and it is difficult to argue against that, but again, the text does not specifically say that Moses is the "him" that God seeks to kill, or why God seeks to kill "him"</p>
	<p>The other view, in the context of the prior discussion of the death of the firstborn is that the "him" God is seeking to kill is Gershom. The "why" associated with this point of view also makes sense.</p> <p>Yes, up to this point God has been dealing with Moses. God has chosen Moses, knowing all of his human flaws. Still, he is God's spokesman to Pharaoh, his prophet. Moses has already angered God before. When Moses was refusing to obey at the burning bush, how did it end?</p> <p>It ended by God saying, alright, I'll get Aaron to be your mouthpiece...God made a way for Moses to do what God wanted him to do. He was still God's chosen man for the job.</p> <p>Now, all of the sudden, along the way to do what God has called him to do, God wants to put him to death? That's difficult.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>But again, we can't say for certain, on the basis of the text, that this is not the case...Nor does it make a difference in the ultimate application of the passage (we will get there in a little bit)</p>
	<p>Thirdly, why wasn't the son circumcised? This may be the major question that unpacks this whole text.</p> <p>Circumcision was not uncommon in Moses' day. Not only did the Hebrews circumcise, but the Egyptians also circumcised.</p> <p>They were different forms of circumcision, for different reasons, but both cultures from which Moses came practiced circumcision.</p> <p>So, here is Moses, who is a Hebrew, and who was also raised as an Egyptian, and his boy is not circumcised. Why?</p> <p>Can I be transparent with you for a moment? I don't know! The Bible doesn't tell us that. Nor is it necessary for us to know that in order to get to the application of this text.</p> <p>But listen to this from John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion. (If anybody is allowed to speculate on stuff, it's Calvin): <i>"I therefore unhesitatingly conclude that vengeance was declared against Moses for his negligence, which was connected with still heavier sins. For he had not omitted his son's circumcision from forgetfulness, or ignorance, or carelessness only, but because he was aware that circumcision was disagreeable to his wife or to his father-in-law. Therefore, lest his wife should quarrel with him, or his father-in-law trouble him, he preferred to gratify them rather than give an occasion for enmity, or disagreement or disturbance."</i></p> <p>The text doesn't say that, but can't you see it?</p>
	<p>There is this circumcision thing. Some cultures practice different forms of it for different reasons, and some cultures don't practice it at all.</p> <p>Moses and Zipporah would not be the first couple in the history of the world to disagree over whether or not to circumcise their son. By the way, outside of the Middle East, America is about the only place in the world that regularly practices circumcision today. In most places in the world, people don't do that. Europeans don't do that. Asian cultures don't do that. Here in America, there are families who have these discussions about the circumcision of their sons.</p> <p>It is not completely out of the question, by any means, that the reason Gershom was not circumcised was to avoid conflict on the subject between Moses and his wife.</p>
	<p>That, by the way, answers another question: <i>"Why is it Zipporah that hurriedly, and quickly took a flint knife and performed the circumcision?"</i></p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>Perhaps, because there had been discussions in the family about this...and she had been unwilling to do this...</p> <p>And they had talked about this idea of the Covenant, and the sign of the Covenant, and how important it was...</p> <p>And if there was a wife who was unwilling to give her son this sign, and then suddenly death is knocking at the door...What mother wouldn't pick up the flint knife and do the deed? Right there on the spot? Gruesome though it would have been. Because, by the way, Moses is 80 years old, and his sons are not babies. And that's all I'm going to say about that.</p>
	<p>Next Question: I ask this because it is in the Bible, and the question has to be asked: <i>"Why did Zipporah do what she did with the foreskin?"</i></p> <p>Isn't it great when a Church commits to systematic exposition of scripture? And you can't just skip over texts?</p> <p>Verse 25: <i>Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched <u>his</u>'¹ feet with it</i></p>
	<p>Note that even though the ESV say's Moses' feet, that is not in the original Hebrew text. Your Bible may have a footnote after Moses' name in verse 25 telling you the Hebrew text reads "his feet" rather than "Moses' feet." There is another translation issue here, and that translation issue is this: More than likely it wasn't his "feet" that were touched. It happened elsewhere, and feet is just a polite way to put it.</p> <p>Why did she do that?</p> <p>Can I be honest with you? <i>I don't know.</i> But she did it.</p> <p>It's significant. We will talk about that when we apply this text. But this is not a normal practice. That is one of the things that makes this passage so difficult. There is very little about this text that is normal. In fact, there is almost nothing about it that is normal.</p>
	<p>Next Question: <i>"What is this "Bridegroom of Blood" stuff?"</i></p> <p><i>Again, verse 25: Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses'¹ feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!"</i></p> <p>So maybe it's because of the use of the term "bridegroom" here that translators insert Moses' name instead of the "his" in the original Hebrew text. Zipporah only has one bridegroom, and that's Moses. So, because of this term "Bridegroom of Blood" it must have been Moses whom she touched with the foreskin.</p> <p>However, that term "Bridegroom of Blood" can be translated a number of different ways. In fact, the same word that is translated here as "Bridegroom" is the same word that is used to describe the relationship between Moses and</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>his Father-in-Law, because the term means, technically, a relation by law or by marriage. So, it could be spouse, it could be father-in-law, it could be brother-in-law, it could be sister-in-law.</p> <p>The word is used for a covenantal relationship that is not a relationship through birth, but rather, a relationship that is entered into through covenants like marriage. So this could be translated, <i>“You are a covenant relationship by blood to me.”</i></p> <p>And that would be perfectly fine to translate it that way. If we translate it, <i>“You are a covenant relationship by blood to me.”</i>, then there would be another reason to believe that this is not talking about Moses.</p> <p>After Zipporah acts, God relents. Verse 26: <i>So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.</i></p>
	<p>Here’s the last Question: <i>“What does this all mean?”</i> Because that’s what really matters, isn’t it?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can’t say for certain who the “him” is. • We can’t say for certain why God is seeking to kill him. • We can’t say for certain why he is not circumcised. • We can’t say for certain why Zipporah does what she does the way that she does it. • We cannot say these things for certain. <p>However, there are a couple of things that can help us. First of all, Translation is the key. Listen to this passage the way it would read in its original, without the assumptions of the translators.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p><i>At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched his¹ feet with it and said, “Surely you are a covenant relative of blood to me!”²⁶ So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A covenant relative of blood,” because of the circumcision.</i></p>
	<p>My preference is to say in interpreting this, is to say that this is Gershom. The “him” who was met at the lodging place...the one God sought to kill.</p> <p>I hold that very loosely, the overwhelming majority of Bible Scholars argue that this is Moses. There are, however a few who agree with the interpretation that it is Gershom.</p> <p>I believe that when you look at this passage in its context, and you look at the discussion that happens just before these verses, When you look at God saying, basically, <i>“I am going to set my people free. I’m going to harden Pharaoh’s heart, and because of his hard heart, Egypt is going to get the tenth plague, and the tenth plague is going to be the death of the firstborns, and I am going to mark-out my people, and I am going to protect my people, by a</i></p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p><i>blood covenant. And because of a blood covenant, my people will not lose their first-born.</i></p> <p>Now, on the way down to Egypt, God seeks to kill Gershom, who is Moses' firstborn son. Zipporah takes the flint knife. And here, I like Calvin's idea. Because how else do you explain why this firstborn son is not circumcised? We don't know, but we know that Zipporah is the one who takes the flint knife. The idea that she was originally against the circumcision and therefore why it didn't happen on the 8th day after Gershom was born....this makes sense to me. Her boy is about to die. All of the sudden, whatever qualms you had about circumcision...they're gone. She takes the knife. She cuts the foreskin. She applies the blood, and she says, Now....Now...we are related by covenant. Now we are part of this covenant people who are going to be protected when the 10th plague of the death of the firstborn comes.</p>
	<p>By the way, theologically, this idea works, even if it is Moses she does that to. Moses has lived in three different cultures and needs to cement his identity with God's chosen people. He can't become the Law maker if he is a Law breaker. He has to be all-in with his identity as a Hebrew.</p> <p>but I prefer the idea that this is Gershom, although nobody can say for certain.</p> <p>So God relents and the text goes on to bring Aaron to Moses and take this travelling party to Egypt:</p>
5	<p>²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰ Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ 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 worshiped.</p>
	<p>Whoever "him" might be, he is no longer at the point of death. No longer in the death grip of God. Moses and his wife and sons, accompanied by Aaron go back to Egypt, and thus the Exodus begins. And as the Exodus unfolds, the hardness of Pharaoh's heart stays hard to the end, when God, rescuing his first born son, Israel requires of Pharaoh and all the Egyptians, the deaths of their firstborn sons. And the firstborn son of Moses survives....because his mother ...circumcised him with a piece of flint ...in the wilderness ... along the way.</p>
	<p>If translation is the key to interpreting this passage, then Circumcision is the lock that needs to be opened to understand its application. Of all the covenant signs an omnipotent, sovereign, perfect God could have chosen, Why this? Why Circumcision? It is awkward to think about. It is awkward to talk about, it's intimate, it's gross, it's bloody. Why this? Why not something</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	else? Why not something more visible? Why not something both men and women can share? What's wrong with a handshake to seal a deal? Why circumcision? To understand it better, let's go back to Genesis 17, where it all started:
6	“ ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Genesis 17:10-11
7	“ ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. Genesis 17:12-13
8	“ ¹⁴ 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.” Genesis 17:14
	<p>There is every reason to believe Abraham already knew what circumcision was when God decreed it. But the covenant command that God gives is actually quite different than circumcision as it was known and practiced elsewhere in at least two key ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The age of the recipient : In most cultures it is a puberty rite that takes place in adolescence or just before a young man is married. Covenant circumcision is for infants. To mark them for life. 2. The removal of the entire foreskin: In other cultures, it is just a slice. It is an incision rather than the complete removal of the foreskin, but still called a circumcision.
	<p>This second reason actually shows up in the Bible, in Joshua 5:1-9.</p> <p>The people of Israel have just crossed the Jordan and are ready to conquer the promised land. But there is a problem. They cannot enter the land uncircumcised. They must respond in covenant faithfulness. The text says in Joshua 5:2 that the men were to be circumcised a second time. Apparently the first time was in the way of the Egyptians (a slice) and not a covenant circumcision. After the men were all circumcised, the Lord said to Joshua, “today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you” (Joshua 5:9)</p> <p>It is very interesting about God's scrupulousness about the covenant sign. Calling a partial incision done in the Egyptian pattern a circumcision is not enough. It is a reproach to God, and the people of Israel cannot enter the land of promise with men and boys who are carrying the reproach of Egypt.</p>
	This practice of circumcision could be said to be more sacred to the children of Israel than even the sabbath.

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>John 7: 21-23: (Jewish leaders are angry with Jesus, because he healed someone on the Sabbath) <i>Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well?”</i> John 7:21-23</p> <p>Circumcision was huge. These are people who had problems with walking a certain distance on the Sabbath.</p>
	<p>In the New Covenant, we see talk of Circumcision as well. But in the New Covenant, it is a circumcision of the heart. The New Covenant is not like the Abrahamic Covenant.</p> <p>This is clear in Galatians. In the new covenant, everyone is circumcised, just like in the old covenant...but in the new covenant, it is the circumcision of the heart. Not everyone is part of the new covenant – only believers are part of the new covenant, which is why only believers are baptized.</p> <p>We are saying you are now part of the covenant people of God.</p>
	<p>If translation is key to understanding this passage, and circumcision is the lock that must be opened, then Salvation is the doorway we pass through.</p> <p>When you look at this passage in light of God’s saving work, both with the Children of Israel at the Passover, and what the Passover pointed to...</p> <p>Today’s passage makes even more sense.</p> <p>First: Sinners are constantly in danger of God’s wrath. We get uncomfortable with this passage. One of the reasons we get uncomfortable is because God seems to be about to kill an “innocent” person.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p><i>At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death</i> Exodus 4:24</p>
	<p>We read that, and we say, “That’s not right!” We don’t know who “him” is, but if its Moses, or if it’s Gershom...Why? What have they done?</p> <p>Here’s a news flash: They both deserved to die....Because they’re sinners.</p> <p>Here’s a news flash: You deserve to die!Because you’re a sinner!</p> <p>It is a real danger to read Exodus as if all Egyptians are guilty and all Israelites are sinless and blameless. That’s not the case. This is not a story of “sinners” and “saints” This is a story of the “chosen” and the “reprobate.”</p> <p>Neither Moses, nor his son “deserve” to be saved. Israel does not “deserve” to be saved. What Moses and Gershom deserve is to be met at an Inn and be killed by a holy God. That’s what they deserve. Anyone in this story who ends up living and not dying, it is because of Grace, not because of merit.</p>

Slide No.	Notes
	<p>So, our first problem with this text is not our understanding of what God is doing, but rather our misunderstanding of what the people in it are deserving. This is a reminder that every man stands condemned and deserving of death. Secondly, God's wrath can only be assuaged by the means he provides. The text makes it clear that it is the cutting of the foreskin and smearing of the blood that assuages God's wrath. Nothing else would have sufficed, no matter how sincere Zipporah was. The requirement was this covenant sign.</p>
	<p>Thirdly, the means of saving God's people always involves a blood covenant. Hebrews 9:22: Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.</p> <p>It is Christ's blood that redeems us. It is the shedding of his blood that assuages the wrath of God. It is the blood of Jesus that is the propitiation for us. And it is only the blood of Jesus.</p> <p>And there is a picture in this passage of one who is deserving of death outside the covenant community. And it is this severing by the circumcision, and this application of blood that assuages the wrath of God.</p> <p>What does all of this mean? I can tell you that.</p> <p>You want to know who "him" is? I've got an opinion, but I could be wrong. It doesn't make all that much difference.</p> <p>Do you want to know who was circumcised? I'm not sure. I've got an opinion, but I could be wrong, It doesn't make all that much difference</p> <p>Do you want to know who was touched with the blood? I don't know. I've got an opinion. I could be wrong. It doesn't make all that much difference</p>
	<p>Why? Here's what I do know: This event in scripture is a foreshadowing of the Passover. And the Passover is a foreshadowing of the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>I know what this means. This means that God saves his people through the shedding of blood.</p> <p>How? Christ died for sin. Once for all, the just for the unjust in order that he might bring us back to God. That's how. It is through his blood. It is the blood of Christ. It is his death on the cross and the resurrection. That is all.</p> <p>That is the only way.</p>

Benediction

For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.

How then was it counted to him?

Was it before or after he had been circumcised?

It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Romans 4:9-12

Ten Questions

1. Who left Midian with Moses to return to Egypt? [Exodus 4:20]
2. What did the LORD command Moses to do when he met Pharaoh? [Exodus 4:21]
3. What did the LORD say would happen to Pharaoh's heart? [Exodus 4:21]
4. How did the LORD describe Israel? [Exodus 4:22]
5. What did the LORD say would happen in Egypt if Pharaoh refused to let Israel go? [Exodus 4:23]
6. What did the LORD do at a lodging place along the way? [Exodus 4:24]
7. Who is "Him?" [Exodus 4:24-26]
8. How did Zipporah respond? [Exodus 4:24-26]
9. What does this passage foreshadow?
10. How are God's covenant people marked today?