



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Exodus 4:18-31

Exodus

"The Mission, The Message and Divine Discipline"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Nice to have a combination of classes this morning. And as Dave indicated we are studying the book of Exodus. And this morning we will finish up chapter 4, with verses 18 through 31. So if you have your Bibles open to chapter 4, as you are instructed a moment ago, follow along with me as I read beginning with verse 18.

“Then Moses departed and returned to Jethro, his father-in-law, and said to him, “Please let me go, that I may return to my brethren who are in Egypt and see if they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” Now, the Lord said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt for all the men who are seeking your life are dead.” The Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand. And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord. Israel is my son, my firstborn.” So I said to you, “Let my son go, that he may serve me. But you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son were firstborn.”

“Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and threw it at Moses feet. And she said, “You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me.” So he let

him alone. At that time, she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision." Now the Lord said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." So he went and met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord, with which he had sent him. And all the signs that he had commanded him to do. And Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then perform the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel, and that he had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped."

Let's bow together in a word of prayer and asked the Lord to bless our time of study this morning and bless this reading of his word. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you that we can come together again this morning and continue our study in the book of Exodus. We thank you for the grace that you've extended to us that by virtue of regeneration, by virtue of the presence of the Holy Spirit within those whom you have redeemed we have eyes to see and ears to hear otherwise, father, we would be a people who lack understanding; who lack even the interest to know your word. But because of your grace we have an interest in these things, and we have the ability given by you to understand. And so we pray that you would guide us and direct us in our thinking. Open our hearts to the truth.

Pray that we would become a teachable receptive people and that your revelation this passage from Exodus chapter 4 would have a good effect upon us in making us more and more obedient to your word; more and more like your son Jesus Christ. We pray for those whose names are mentioned on the calendar of concerned and we remember the difficulties that various people have, sicknesses, discouragement. We ask that you would give encouragement to them, and if it please you, give healing.

Regardless of what your will is, in regard to healing Father, we do pray that you would enable them to look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith and gain encouragement from him. And now, Lord, we ask you to bless our time of study. And we pray that you would guide us in this time of considering the truth before us, and we pray that you would teach us. We pray these things in our savior's name. Amen.

[Message] Our lesson this morning is, *The mission, the message and divine discipline.*

One of the keywords in the Christian's vocabulary is the word grace. And we just sang one of the most famous hymns ever written on the subject of grace. And it is certainly a word, a doctrine, concept that gives great encouragement to us. We have received everything as a gift. We have salvation justifications, sanctification, eternal life; you can just list the blessings that we have. We have them all by grace. Not by any merit of our own. Not by any work of our own. It comes to us, all that we have, as a gift. That means that we are a privileged people.

But grace should never be used as a pretext for license or for laziness. Privilege always carries with it responsibilities. And the commands, the warning, the admonitions of our Lord and the apostles make that very clear. What does Paul tell the Philippians and Philippians 2:12? He says to them, the commands them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. And so they are to be diligent in that. There's a gift that's been given. Now they are to work it out and live according to it. And that principle, that privilege carries obligations. That principle of obligations, to our obligation to our duties; it's a principle that was made very clear to Moses. A few men were as privileged as he was. He was called to serve the Lord as Israel's deliver.

And yet his mission almost ended before it ever began. Because of a foolish failure to fulfill a fundamental obligation, and one that we may consider to be rather small considering the price that he almost

paid. And yet it's not insignificant at all. Moses has finally yielded to God's call to return to Egypt and deliver his people from bondage. And God equipped him with promises and powers. But when he finally begins his return to undertake his mission God pays him a rather startling visit that reminds us that every servant of the Lord, regardless of what dispensation they may live in, regardless of who they are, every Christian has his or her responsibilities and God takes those responsibilities very seriously.

And so, right alongside the word grace should be the word obedience; obedience in the most seemingly insignificant things. Moses as I said, has finally agreed to return to Egypt. He had resisted quite a bit when the Lord first called him out of the burning bush to return and be his servant, but finally he seems ready to obey. But before Moses can return to Egypt, he first had to drive the flocks back to his father-in-law Jethro, who own the flocks. And from whom he also must seek permission to leave with his family. This was a patriarchal society. Jethro his father-in-law was the one who was really the Lord over him, so to speak, and so he seeks his permission to leave. And Jethro consents, unlike Laban who tried to keep Jacob from leaving. Jethro agrees and sends him off with the words, "Go in peace."

As Moses departs, the Lord gives him further encouragement. In verse 19 by informing him that, he no longer need fear the consequences of the incident with the Egyptian in which he had slain an Egyptian, buried him in the sand and his life was, as a consequence, sought by Pharaoh. This was some 40 years earlier. This is what caused him to leave Egypt and flee to Midian. But he no longer need fear the consequences of that act, because as the Lord tells him, all those who sought his life were dead.

It illustrates, I think, how God makes smooth the way of those who are obedient and faithful to him. He providentially removes obstacles that would stand in the way of his servants. In Moses case he had no resistance from Jethro, his father-in-law, and he was assured

by the Lord that he was no longer wanted man in Egypt. And so God, when Moses's response to him in faith and obedience, makes the way of his servant smooth; he prepares the way for him, he goes before him, so to speak. And so he returns to Egypt.

Verse 20 states, "With his wife and sons." And so here we are informed that Moses had more than one son; more than Gershom. We learn from chapter 18, that he had a second son, Eleazar. And so with these two sons, he returns, he mounts them, and his wife on a donkey. And Moses himself returns, we're told, with the staff, his shepherd's staff, in his hand. Now that's the army of the Lord. That is the Army that will stand before Pharaoh and deliver God's people. An 80-year-old man with a stick in his hand. And yet with that stick he would meet Pharaoh, in what one commentator describes as, "The greatest duel that ever shook the world."

And you'll notice that the staff in his hand is now called "The staff of God." It wasn't called that before. But this is called "The staff of God" because God's powers will work through it; not the power of Moses. Moses had no power. But this simple shepherd's staff which God has told him would be the means of miracles through which she gave him the various signs; this is now the staff of God. Because all of God's power would be exercised through it, and in so doing, all glory would go to God.

And it's a reminder that God can take the simple things like a stick and use them greatly. I think Moses is very much like that staff he carried in his hand. Of himself, he was powerless. Just as powerless as a simple stick would be. Has no life, it has no ability, it's just a stick and the same is true of Moses; of himself. It had no natural ability and of course that is why there were so many protests by him when he first received this commission by God to go back to Egypt and be Israel's deliverer. "Who am I?" he says. In other words, I have now power who am I to stand before Pharaoh? Who am I to stand before the greatest power of the world at that time?

Well of himself, there was no power, there was no ability, but God was sufficient. And he would supply him with all the mighty power that was necessarily to give success to Moses's mission.

F.B. Meyer mentions a statue of Phillips Brooks, which stands in Trinity churchyard in Boston. Now maybe some of you have seen it. Phillips Brooks was, in the last months of his life, appointed Bishop of Boston and he's famous to us, at least if you know his name, he's famous to us from his work that he produced and one of the great Christmas carols, *O' Little town of Bethlehem*. We may not know the name, Phillips Brooks, but we certainly know the hymn.

Well, Mr. Myers states that the statue is a perpetual reminder of things not visible to the eye. In other words, those things that are going on behind the scenes that we don't perceive that are realities nonetheless. And he describes the statue, "That Bishop Brooks stands with his right hand uplifted and his left hand on an open Bible with a cross in the background to indicate that that was the focus of his ministry." An open Bible preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And just behind on the left is a figure of Christ represented in his resurrected glorified state, with his right hand on Mr. Brook's shoulder. As though to indicate that it is by Christ's empowerment, Christ's strengthening, that the man of God is able to serve God faithfully and well. Well that's the relationship that the servant of the Lord has to the Lord. And we never stand alone and what we do. Wherever we are, as we represent him we can know with confidence that he's with us; promises to be with us. And not simply to be with us, but to enable us, to strengthen us, to give us the power that we need to accomplish the mission, on which he has sent each and every one of us.

In verse 21, the Lord reminds Moses of the power that he has given to him. And commands him to use it. To be faithful with that which God has entrusted to him in the mission on which he has sent him. "See that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power." A previously Moses had not been instructed

to perform miracles before Pharaoh, just before Israel. And now he says do them before Pharaoh. But as the Lord forewarns Moses in this command Pharaoh will respond in faith as Israel would. Because, as the Lord says, "I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go."

Now, as you may well know the whole subject of the hardening Pharaoh's heart plays a major part in the first chapters of the book of Exodus. And in Hebrew text, there are three words that are used for this process of hardening. All essentially express the same idea. The word that used here is a word that means to be strong, or in this case, to make strong, so that the sense is, the Lord would make Pharaoh's heart to be strong-willed in refusing to let Israel go.

Back in chapter 3 in verse 19, the Lord told Moses that Pharaoh would not let them go. He says, "Not by a mighty hand." May indicate that regardless of the miracles that you show the Pharaoh the request that you make and the reasoning that you give for those requests, regardless of all of that he's not going to let you go; and this is the reason. God would strengthen his heart against doing that; against responding to the request of Moses.

There's another example of this in Joshua 11:20, where the Lord gives the Canaanites the strong will to fight against Israel. And the text reads, "That it was of the Lord to harden their hearts to meet Israel embattled." That is, the Lord gave them a strong desire to fight Israel. There's every reason for them not to fight Israel. They knew about what had happened in Egypt. They knew about the strength and the power of the Lord God. As you remember, they trembled at the beginning of Joshua with this army of Israel comes into the land and Rahab the harlot talks about how they had heard the rumors and the reports about the God of Israel. Every reason in the world for them not to fight against this seemingly impregnable army, and yet they did. They went out because God strengthen their heart or harden their hearts to meet Israel embattled with the result that the Canaanites were destroyed.

So here, God promises to strengthen Pharaoh's will and refusing to let Israel go with the result that Pharaoh will ultimately be destroyed. Now, at other times it is said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. And sometimes the hardening is described in a neutral sense. Simply said, "Pharaoh's heart was hardened." What that indicates is that Pharaoh is a willing participant in the hardening. He's not hardened against his will. Nor should we think of him as a good man who's forced to do bad. This is judicial hardening. But the significance of the first statement here in chapter 4 which will govern all of the other statements that are made throughout the early chapters of Exodus is that God is the ultimate cause.

The Lord is not speaking as one who foresaw Pharaoh's stubborn response that is the one who would bring it about, as the God of absolute omnipotence. He would cause Pharaoh to bring down on himself his own judicial destruction; that which he deserved.

Now why does the Lord tell this to Moses? Why does he inform him that he's going to harden the heart of Pharaoh? To stir up some theological debate? Well, it certainly done that, over the centuries, but that's not the reason that he informs Moses that he's going to harden the heart of Pharaoh. The reason was to give encouragement to Moses. And to keep him from being discouraged. Time and again, Pharaoh would refuse to let Israel go. Moses will go before him, and he will make his request and Pharaoh will refuse it. He will cast down the rod, a miracle will occur, it won't move Pharaoh. At times, Pharaoh will seem to give in and give his permission for Israel to leave and then he'll take it back.

Time and again Moses will be met by this refusal by Pharaoh. And so Moses was to be prepared for that. And know that Pharaoh's response fit within that plan of God. It's not that Moses had failed in his mission when Pharaoh refuses his request. It's that this is the will of God, this is the plan of God. God was in control of this king and the first cause of the hardening.

As Proverbs 21:1, states, "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he wishes." And there is great encouragement and knowing that God's sovereignty extends over all of the rulers of this world. Over all of the evil rulers of this world. Saddam Hussein, who ever may be making a lot of noise at this particular time or any time in history, God is in control. And not only of the great leaders of the world, but everyone. And so that we can be greatly encouraged by that fact.

And his will, his decree is inscrutable to us. We can't figure it all out. And we're not expected to; we're finite creatures. We can't know everything that God has planned and understand it thoroughly. We can accept what he says, but to understand it fully and completely, no, we can't do that because as I say, and as you know, we're finite creatures. But it is a great encouragement to know that when conflicts arise, God is in control. Not simply of the situation in a very general sense, but specifically in control of the very ones who would oppose his people. Those who oppose you when you give expression to your face. Ultimately, that all rests within the providence and the will of God. And so there is reason for encouragement in this.

We, for our part, are simply to do God's will. Do what he commands of us and trust him to give success and know that he is in complete control even when there's opposition. So Moses was not to be discouraged by the stubborn response of Pharaoh, and think that he was failing in his task. It all fit within God's plan of increasing his glory, and increasing the manifestation of that glory, as he will explain later on in the book of Exodus. The message he was to bring to Pharaoh is stated in verses 22 and 23.

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, says the Lord, Israel is my son, my firstborn. So I said to you, let my son go that he may serve me. But you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn." So this is a further privilege that Moses has been given. He's been given a glimpse into everything that's going to unfold in this very succinct statement. He's able to know what will happen and

why it's happening. He's not going to let Israel go immediately and judgment will come upon him, and upon his people. But Moses is assured that God's in complete control. So there's a great deal of privilege that's extended to Moses here. And the revelation of the whole plan that's about to unfold. And as we see from the message that he is to deliver before Pharaoh, Israel, as a people is greatly privileged.

Its description of Israel as God's firstborn son indicates the special love that he has for that nation. Israel is not the firstborn nation, chronologically. In fact, it's after Genesis chapter 10, *The Table of Nations* that we read of the call of Abraham and the formation of the people of God. But they do occupy the rank in the privilege of the firstborn son in the family. And they're numerous examples of this in the book of Genesis. In fact, throughout the book of Genesis you see this principle of the second born receiving the blessings.

Isaac was not Abraham's firstborn son. He's the second born, Ishmael was the firstborn. And yet it's Isaac, who was blessed. Jacob was not Isaac's firstborn, Esau was. But Esau, who was passed over in the blessing and the birthright go to the second born Jacob. Jacob is treated as the firstborn, and so too with Israel. They were not the first nation created that they occupy the place of the firstborn, because in Abraham Israel was called out of the nation for special blessing and special place among the nations; service special purpose. And so they are described by God as his son, his firstborn son.

And because Pharaoh would refuse to release God's firstborn son, God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn son. The word son is used collectively of Israel. That is all the people of Israel, the multitude of people are considered to be one person, one son. And so probably the word son, in regard to Pharaoh, is to be understood in the same way and in a collective sense. Pharaoh was the great representative of that nation. He was its king, its pharaoh. He embodied the nation of Egypt, and so all of Egypt's sons were considered to be his single son.

And because of his sent against the Lord, his son, the firstborn sons of Egypt would all perish in the final plague. A son for a son.

Now this is divine justice, and if it's a pattern that unfolds throughout the latter part of the book of Exodus, where we have the law explained and given. And exemplified in the penalty that's inscribed in Chapter 21. "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Now that sometimes a caricature or characterized as a brutal unforgiving kind of law, but then justice is unforgiving. Grace is forgiving. Justice is unforgiving, but it's not unfair. And neither is this unfair. The point is penalty that fits the crime. No excessive penalty. Penalty that fits the crime. Excessive penalty was what often took place in the ancient near East.

And what we have in the law of God is that penalty is to fit the crime, not to exceed the crime. And so we don't have life for eye, but for life. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. And here it's son for son because of a of Pharaoh's willful rejection of the truth of God. And of course earlier in the book, you'll remember that it was the Pharaoh who killed the sons of Israel. And so this is a man with blood on his hands.

And so in this brief revelation regarding Moses's mission and the message that he was to give God informs him that the conflict that he was about to have with Pharaoh would be difficult, but the outcome was certain, because God was in control. He was in control of the elements as we see from the miracles that have been given to him to perform. He is in control of the very heart of Pharaoh himself. Great encouragement is given to Moses.

But none of this precludes human responsibility. Not on the part of Pharaoh, nor on the part of Moses. For Moses to carry out God's mission successfully he had to be a faithful servant, and that begins in his own house. But as we learn from a strange incident that now follows there was a blemish in his obedience.

The family had stopped for the night, on its return to Egypt at a lodging place somewhere between Midian and Egypt when the Lord

met Moses and tried to kill him. Now the incident has the same element of mystery that the account of Genesis 32, has in which, at the river Jabbock, Jacob wrestled with a man until daybreak. The man was the Lord as the text reveals at the end. And here too, it is the Lord who visits Moses. Perhaps there was a similar struggle as that which Jacob had, we don't know. Some think that what happened here was Moses became severely ill and his life hung in the balance suddenly.

Now the incident is somewhat obscure because of its brevity. In fact, at first no reason is indicated for the Lord's attempt on Moses's life. Moses was doing what God had told him and going back to Egypt. He seems to be well within the will of God. He seems to be acting out of obedience. When suddenly the Lord visits them in this rather peculiar way and seeks to kill him.

So no reason is given, at least initially, but Zipporah, Moses wife, immediately perceive the reason for God's anger. And without being told what to do, she took a piece of flint and circumcised her son. Then she threw the foreskin at Moses feet and said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." And then we read in verse 26, "So He" that means the Lord, "Let him alone." "At that time, she said you are a bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision." So the reason the Lord sought to put Moses to death was he had failed to circumcise his son. We're not told which son it was, but it's likely that it was Eleazar, his second son.

Circumcision may seem to us a rather small matter, and it's a mission somewhat insignificant. But you have to remember that was the sign of the Abraham had covenant. And it's the mission was a serious breach of that covenant. In Genesis 17:14, we read that the Lord informs Abraham, "An uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant" and so is a serious breach of the covenant not to perform circumcision on all those who are commanded to be circumcised.

And here Moses, the man who was to bring the message of the covenant to the sons of Israel was not obedient to that covenant in his own household. Why he failed in this command isn't stated. Perhaps over the 40 years that he had been in Midian, and separated from his people he had become somewhat lax and his responsibilities and in his duties; it's very easy to do that. To be away from the people of God, to be away from the ministry of the word, to not have someone to provoke you, or move you to righteousness; it's easy to become lazy, to become lax. Perhaps that's what happened to Moses.

Or perhaps it was as a result of difference to Zipporah, who herself was a Midianite, she was not Hebrew. And from her response, seems to have shown a few strong dislike for circumcision. Perhaps he didn't circumcise his child because of her. Whatever the reason, it was his responsibility to perform that duty. He was commanded to do that and he failed to do it, and so got threatened his life.

To show him his sin, and to indicate the seriousness, with which God takes that command. And his life was spared only when the circumcision was performed. And when it was performed by the Zipporah, she was provoked to call Moses, "A bridegroom of blood."

Now that phrase is another one of the obscure features of this passage. It may simply be expressive of her anger over what she considered to be a cruel for her child. Or it may be that she is expressing a truth in that statement, which is that she has saved his life and gained him back as her bridegroom. She was in danger of losing him, losing him in death. But she gained his life back by the blood of her son; by this act of circumcision. This one writer states, "She received him back, as it were from the dead and married him a new he was in fact a bridegroom of blood to her."

It is still a bit obscure, I think, but the central point of this whole incident is very clear. The leader of Israel could not lead until he kept the terms of the covenant, and for that reason, the Lord visits him. And why he visited in so late, why was he not instructed at the very beginning when he came to the burning Bush to go and correct that

incident or that omission in his own household? And we're not told. It may be, though, that this indicates the long-suffering of God.

He waited and waited and waited for his servant to deal properly and to correct the omissions that characterize him. Until as Egypt was being approached time had an effect run out. The Lord brings his drawn discipline on this servant.

The lesson should be clear to us. In order to serve him, we not only have to be willing to undertake the challenge. And, you'll remember Moses was not willing a first. God continued and persevered with this servant to overcome all of his objections and finally Moses becomes willing to undertake the challenge of the ministry, but that's not enough. It's not enough to simply be willing to undertake a mission, a ministry that God has given to you. We have to be obedient in the basics and that begins at home. It begins with our personal lives and with those in our immediate family.

Every covenant has its terms. It has certain responsibilities connected with it. The new covenant is the covenant of grace, not a covenant of works a covenant of grace, but it has obligations, responsibilities, duties that are connected to it. Now let me give you a few examples. Paul commands children in Ephesians 6:1, to obey their parents. A disobedient child who persists in disobedience, who continues in that disobedience will not be used of God. In Ephesians 5, he commands husbands to love their wives. Husbands who failed to love their wives will not be used of the Lord. Wives to fail to submit to their husbands will not be used of the Lord. Now I say that and I rather sweeping way.

Is not to say God doesn't use disobedient people at all. It's not to say that we must be perfect in our lives before God can use. He uses us and our weakness, he uses us when there are areas in our lives in which there's still disobedience. But to the degree that there's disobedient, there'll be a lack of blessing. So we are commanded to be obedient. And obedience begins at home. That's why Paul stipulates

before man can be an elder in the church, he must manage his own household well.

Before one can manage his household well, or before a woman can submit to her husband there must be a personal desiring of God. A desire to please God, a desire to obey him. And we must seek to develop our relationship with him, that's fundamental to all that we do. That involves prayer that involves Bible study. It's a matter of the heart. It's a matter of desire. The sometimes we must come to prayer with an open confession, "I don't want to be here, Lord. I'd rather be watching the game. I'd rather be doing something else. I'm busy." Often times it our busy schedule that may not be all that busy, but seems to be busy when it comes time to get on our knees and pray that keeps us from doing that. These are the things that must be first in our lives.

And also one of the important ways that we show our devotion to the Lord in which we are obedient to him is by observing the ordinances that he has given to the church. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

One thing this passage shows is that the Lord does not take lightly the ordinances that he gives to his people. In this case, it's circumcision. We're not under that command anymore. We're not under the command to keep the Sabbath and to keep the Passover and all of these that were very important for Israel during that time in history. But we do have the commands to observe baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the sign of our salvation; it doesn't save. It doesn't make a person holier. But it is the sign, the open testimony that we have put our faith in Jesus Christ, that we are the recipients of God's grace. And the Lord's Supper also does not save, does not impart grace to a person, but it is for our benefit, for our signification and something God has commanded. And it helps us to remember what Christ has done for us, to remind us who we are, to remind us that he is coming again; the goal of history. What it is to be a motivating factor in our lives that this world is passing away. We're different from this

world. And God's kingdom is someday going to be established and we are to lift for that.

Now the ceremonies, these ordinances may seem somewhat small and insignificant to us, but they are important to God because he has commanded them to be observed by us and the person who neglects them will lack blessing.

Moses was learning this. As strange and as obscure as this episode may seem, it was something of a turning point in his life under divine discipline of major sin of omission, was corrected and he was now ready to proceed on to Egypt and undertake the mission that God had given to him. Zipporah, however, was not, because Moses sent her and his sons back to Midian. The text doesn't say that, but that's obvious from what occurs later in chapter 18, when after the Exodus has occurred, after the nation has come to Mount Sinai, Jethro, his father-in-law and the sons to Moses again. So evidently she was only a halfhearted participant in the mission who would offer no real help to Moses, and so in light of her anger he sends her back home.

Moses did with the author of Hebrews would later urge readers of his book to do in chapter 12, where he commands to lay aside every encumbrance in the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race that's before us. And so Moses has put aside that sin, has put aside the encumbrances and he is now ready to go to Egypt and serve the Lord. Moses was giving great privilege as a member of the covenant. He was given great privilege to be God's servant, but privileges carry obligations. And having addressed and accepted those obligations Moses now goes to Egypt.

At this time, Aaron, his brother also received a revelation from God to meet Moses in the wilderness. And when they met, we read in verse 28, "Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord, with which he had sent him, and all the signs he had commanded him to do. And when the two of them arrived in Egypt they assembled the elders of Israel, as the Lord commanded and performed the three signs that Moses had been empowered to do with the shepherds staff." with the

result of the people believed just as the Lord had promised. And further, when Moses told them how the Lord was - I should say, Aaron, because Aaron is now the spokesman, Moses didn't want that privilege - so when Aaron tells them that the Lord was concerned about them, and had seen their affliction, they bowed low and worshiped.

Now this is the very thing that Moses feared would not happen. He feared that he'd go back to Egypt, no one would listen to his voice, he'd be a failure as he had been some 40 years earlier. And yet the very thing that God said would happen, "They'll listen to your voice. They'll believe you." occurs here. And so Moses fears prove false, as our fears, always will when our fears are in conflict with what the word of God commands.

God promises something, it will take place. We are simply called upon to trust him, to believe and watch them perform his work. And so this is what happens with Moses. He goes back in obedience and the people responded faith that they believe.

Now what do we learn from Moses experience in his passage? We learn that God is sovereign. He sovereign over the elements, but he is, as this passage makes very clear, sovereign over, even those who opposed the gospel. He's sovereign over the hearts of men.

We learn that he prepares the way before those who are obedient to him who act in faith. And he prepares our hearts that we might be obedient. And when there is a lack of obedience he disciplines us. He brings us into greater conformity to his will and his word, because our service is greatly hindered. And at times our service is even destroyed when entangling sin is not dealt with, when it's not confessed and when is not removed.

You want success in your life? I think we all want success, but when I ask that I'm really speaking in terms of our walk with the Lord, because that's where success begins. Not with financial success; but with spiritual success. Well, if you want that kind of success, if you want to walk right with the Lord and prosper

spiritually that I think it's really very simple. And that question can be answered with a very simple formula and that is simply obedience. And for the most part, obedience in the small things, the little things, the basic things.

There is a series of stanzas, that's found in *Poor Richard's Almanac* that I think captures this very well. I'm sure you've heard me repeat this before, but again, I'll quote Benjamin Franklin, when he writes, "A little neglect may breed mischief. For want of a nail the shoe was lost. For want of the shoe, the horse was lost. For want of a horse, the rider was lost. For want of a rider, the battle was lost. For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost. And all for want of a horseshoe nail."

Little things have a profound effect upon the large things. And so our prayer should be that God would give us the grace to be faithful in the basics and the little things.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Christ as Savior and is Lord, then you are not being obedient in the most fundamental of all commands. And while you may into a professional or monetary success, true success will always escape you because you don't have eternal life. But the wrath of God abides upon you. Well, life and escape from the wrath of God and forgiveness of sin is found in Jesus Christ and found only in him. He is the way in the truth and the life. And that is how we enter into forgiveness. That is how we enter into life. And so if you're here this morning and you do not believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

The son of God, who, at a point of time took to himself human nature became a man in order to die in the place of sinners, and in so doing, satisfying the justice of God completely. Justice is unforgiving. But God poured out his justice upon his son, in order that he might extend forgiveness, extend grace to an undeserving people. To an undeserving people. That means you don't clean up your life before you come to faith. You simply trust in him where you are as you are and allow him to remove those sins as far as the east is

from the west. If you've never done that then I invite you to believe in Jesus Christ and enter into life in the forgiveness of sins.

Let's bow in a world of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you that we've had time to come together and to look at this passage of Scripture. A passage that has some difficult statements in it, some obscure revelations of yours, but we do thank you for it. And we see the essential point in all of it. You're sovereign. We have every reason to have complete confidence in you, and yet we're also obligated to duties that you have placed upon us and we are to be faithful in those responsibilities and obligations, and we pray that you would make us such. Make us a people that are obedient to your word and live lives that are consistent with it. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.