

Exodus 4:19-26 (Txt 24-26) – A Covenant Sign for Eliezer

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: **A covenant is an agreement God makes with man in which he gives grace and obligates man to specific responsibilities.**

If man fulfills his obligations God blesses him with salvation and heaven. If man rejects that agreement, God curses him with guilt and hell.

To remember that covenantal agreement, God gave man a sign.

In the Old Testament that sign was circumcision. It was a most important sign and today you will see how important it was in the life of God's people.

Our headings are:

Moses' Failure

Zipporah's Faithfulness

Eliezer's Freedom

Our goals are: **That as covenant Christians, you will learn to love and use the signs of the covenant, and remember what these signs signify.**

Moses' Failure

24 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that **the LORD met him and sought to kill him.**

1. It seemed Moses' older son, Gershom (stranger, foreigner), was already circumcised, but the younger son, Eliezer, (God is helper) was not circumcised, so God was going to kill Moses.

2. Why wasn't Eliezer circumcised and show he was tied to God as his brother was?

Was it because Moses' sheep kept him busy? Was it because his father-in-law might have objected? Was it because Moses was thinking about his people back in Egypt and forgot?

Moses was without proper worship, fellowship and accountability. No wonder he forgot. When Moses' first son was born while he resided in the desert, he still had a good memory of God's covenant people, so he called his first son, Gershom – stranger, realizing he was among strangers. But life happened and he became careless with the busy-ness of his life. If he did not put the sign of the covenant upon Eliezer his second born, it is certain that **he didn't take the time to teach his children the meaning of the covenant to them. Circumcision was a picture of the Gospel and it wasn't being heard by Moses' sons!**

3. Why was the circumcision so important that God wanted to kill Moses for ignoring it?

a. It was a holy sign. Circumcision (karath) was the cutting off of the foreskin of the male reproductive organ so the covenant keeper would be marked as part of the covenant with Jehovah. **You can see in circumcision the blood flowed over the source of the Seed!** This is why children were circumcised and seen as clean. What a sensible sign!

"Circumcision" (karath) was used figuratively to teach cleanliness. Look at 3 Scriptural examples:

Lepers, because they were unclean, were described as being "cut off" (karath) from among the people.

When God flooded the world, he is said to have "cut off" (karath) the descendants of the land, so his people were kept clean. More, God's people in the ark were united with him in baptism, as 1Peter 3:20-21 show. (No immersion here)

When Israel put the blood on the doorposts in Egypt it was to protect the Israelite children from being – cut off (karath) – from the land.

So Moses didn't care enough that his son was unclean and deserved to be cut off – circumcised from the people. See why God was so angry with him?_

Genesis 17:10 "This is My covenant which you shall keep, **between Me and you and your descendants** after you: **Every male child among you shall be circumcised;** 11 "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or **bought with money from any foreigner** who is not your descendant. 13 "He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 "And the uncircumcised male child, **who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people;** he has broken My covenant."

If one refused to give the sign of the covenant to your children, he deserved to die!

The child who was not marked by the covenant sign deserved to die.

b. Circumcision was a means of Grace. God wanted Moses to use circumcision as a teaching tool so it was a means of grace. Children would ask their parents about the sign and their parents would teach them of the coming Savior and how **he would become their circumcision.** But Moses, **who was just reminded of the covenant God made with Abraham** at the Burning Bush, **showed how little he valued the promises and the conditions for the covenant.** He neglected a means of

grace for his son...and was condemning him and his son to death...physical death for sure...and possibly eternal death. He even just heard God say he would kill the children of the Egyptians for their sins, but he neglected that warning.

c. By ignoring circumcision, Moses was ignoring of the one signified by circumcision – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.
Through Christ shed blood, clean seed can come. How could God let someone who spurns his Son's work escape?
Without Christ as your circumcision, you deserve to die. He was your Covenant Keeper!

4. Not circumcising his son might have seemed like a little thing to Moses, but not to God.

God was ready to kill the man who was going to rescue his suffering people – 2.5 million of them, because of this sin. In fact, **for ignoring the proper value of the covenant, God made many sick...and killed some.** You can read 1Corinthians 11, about those who did not treat the Lord's Supper properly.

1Corinthians 11:30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

God did not threaten to kill Moses when he argued against becoming the speaker and rescuer of God's people at the burning bush, but God was truly angry because this sin was greater!

This was rejecting the spiritual freedom (as opposed to physical freedom) for his people.

5. Lessons:

a. Don't stay away from God's people. If you get a job offer away from here, make sure there is a good church first before you move. Don't accept a job and then look for the church. If you are going to lead your family you have to draw from Christ regularly. **Even good men can fall into trouble when they are not around God's people and God's Word!**

b. Sins of omission can easily be ignored...but are just as serious as sins of commission. Avoiding the sign of the covenant is not a little sin.

c. Let God mark your children and break spiritual bread with them so they are strong in their bones. If you don't teach your children the terms of God's covenant and teach them that Jesus kept the covenant for them, you deserve to die in hell. If they don't know they terms of the covenant, they will die in hell. Shall I repeat that?

d. Watch out for the busy-ness of life. Life is much more than making a good living. Take the time to teach your children. Music and art classes are nice, but are not even remotely as important as teaching the Bible.

e. This is why it is essential to marry in the faith-so your children will be marked with the covenant and taught the terms of the covenant and accept the terms of the covenant.

Zipporah's Faithfulness

25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and **cast (put)** it at Moses' feet, and said, "**Surely you are a husband of blood to me!**"

1. While Moses failed to use the circumcision knife, and while he and his son deserved to die, his wife worked on his behalf, helping him where he failed.

2. How? Zipporah used a sharp stone, or a sharpened stone, a flint knife, and circumcised her son.

Moses was likely sick now and could not circumcise his son (or he would have), so his wife had to do it. Being descendants of Abraham, the Midianites (Zipporah's people) probably circumcised their sons. She knew what to do. But this was by no means an easy thing. It is not easy for a woman to willingly inflict pain on her child or to watch him bleed. This is why her circumcising Eliezer was such a **great act of spousal faithfulness.**

3. Zipporah then put (not cast) the skin and blood at her husband's feet, showing she purchased Moses new life with blood – the blood of her son.

("Cast" implies a negative act, like she was angry and threw something at her husband. But "cast" is usually translated "touch." Some translators simply assumed it was a negative act and used the negative word.) Zipporah saved Moses' life from a certain death with the blood of their son and the death of his flesh. **This is a picture of salvation, not shame.**

4. Lessons:

a. This does not teach that a woman can be a pastor and administer the sacraments or take over any of man's duties, as some argue. *It is a perversion to lay down a rule from a hasty act. Calvin.* You must not develop rules from exceptions. This was a shame to her husband, even as Deborah brought shame to Barak for refusing to go to war against Sisera without her.

b. This is an example of faithfulness of Moses' wife, something young women should emulate. Get a wife who will push you to lead a godly life.

c. Ultimately, God wanted the circumcision of the heart. Deuteronomy 30:6. Circumcision was only a type.

Family Freedom

26 **So He let him go.** Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.

1. Because Zipporah circumcised Eliezer, God let Moses and Eliezer go.

This meant the sickness with which he was struck, was taken away by the Lord. But don't think for a minute it was the human blood and human circumcision that saved them. **It was Zipporah's faith in the coming Savior! Circumcision was an act of faith in Jesus Christ.** She knew the Seed of the Woman would crush the head of the serpent.

2. Because of Zipporah's faith (that resulted in obedience), God saved Zipporah from a life of sadness and loneliness without a husband.

3. Because of Zipporah's faith (that resulted in obedience), Israel had hope again.

Moses had endangered God's people's freedom from Egyptian slavery, but now he could go to Egypt to save God's people.

4. But as Israel was bogged down in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, circumcision was ignored again.

So Joshua obeyed the Lord and circumcised all those who had ignored it during the desert travels.

Joshua 5:7 Then **Joshua circumcised their sons** whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. 8 So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. 9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "**This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.**" Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.

5. Lessons:

a. You do not have to participate in this bloody sign of circumcision today. Blood is no longer necessary. Christ has died as your circumcision. His blood was shed to set you free from spiritual death! So you ought to be baptized with water! (You always need a sign.)

b. If you reject the sign for you or you children, you are treating the Lord's work with contempt.

c. Your children are declared holy when they are water baptized...separated to God. That is only the beginning of your labors for the. Teach them about their Covenant Keeper. And when they receive what their Covenant Keeper did for them, they will be saved!

Conclusion:

Moses badly failed as a husband, father, and leader of God's people by ignoring the covenant duty of putting the covenant sign on his son (and teaching his son). His wife saved the day by doing what Moses should have done through faith. God, in his grace, saved Moses, his son, his family, and eventually, his people from Egypt.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Don't neglect baptism for your children. Let God place his sign on them and teach them the covenant. When you do, they will be able to grab hold of God's promises. If you don't do these things, God will be very angry with you for ignoring his covenant babies and treating Christ's work with contempt.

2. If you don't do this through faith, you are doing it through superstition. Superstition insults the work of Christ.

3. But what would make you diligently do this? When you remember Jesus is your circumcision, that his blood fell to the ground for you, and his side was pierced, and his body died for you, and you have life in him through faith, then you will be faithful in your covenant responsibilities.

Finally, **if your heart has not been circumcised, you have no hope of pleasing God** and entering into heaven when you die. All you can hope for is hell. Do you want to stay in that position? It is not a good place to be. I invite you to ask Jesus to destroy your sins and selfishness.