



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Hidden Hope

April 6, 2025

Exodus 6:14-30

Clint Pressley

*<sup>14</sup> These are the heads of their fathers' houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the clans of Reuben. <sup>15</sup> The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. <sup>16</sup> These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. <sup>17</sup> The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. <sup>18</sup> The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. <sup>19</sup> The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. <sup>20</sup> Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years. <sup>21</sup> The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. <sup>22</sup> The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. <sup>23</sup> Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. <sup>24</sup> The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. <sup>25</sup> Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans.*

*<sup>26</sup> These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts." <sup>27</sup> It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.*

*<sup>28</sup> On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, <sup>29</sup> the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." <sup>30</sup> But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?"*

(Pastor Prays)

You've heard me talk before about how I like to go to old cemeteries. I like them. I like to go to the one in Charleston. We went to Savannah not too long ago. I love Savannah, not because of the shopping, but for the cemetery. We go on vacation down in Apalachicola, Florida. There's a great cemetery in Apalachicola, Florida. If you go up to Washington, one of the great things to see is the Arlington National Cemetery. I like a good cemetery. As a matter of fact, I like them so much that when Connie and I came to our 20th wedding anniversary, we went to Salisbury to see the cemetery there. We stayed at a bed and breakfast, so she had that part, but we went to the cemetery in Salisbury.

But my very favorite cemetery of all time is Emmanuel Cemetery in Union County, North Carolina. When you go there, you will see the name Marion Pressley, who was the father of John Frank Pressley who died when he was 30, but he lived long enough to have a son and named Clinton Century Pressley. They named him Century because he was born on the very first day of the 20th century, January the 1st 1901. Clinton Century Pressley had a son named Clinton Century Pressley, Jr. They liked the name so much that they went for a third and altered it a bit. They had Clinton Lee Pressley, that's me. So 15 miles from here, out 218, you'll find all those that I've named. They were born in about the same place and raised in about the same place and are buried in about the same place. I can go back to where I come from. I have roots and legitimacy.

And although what we have walked through might feel like a bunch of gravestones, it is here for a reason. This genealogy is the legitimacy of Moses and Aaron. If you're reading along in your Bible reading plan and you come up on this genealogy, you might question, why is this here? What is the intent? Why did Moses put it here for us? When you read the book of Exodus, you're reading a storyline. God calls Moses and then Aaron, and then the people. The Pharaoh responds to them by making the slaves make bricks without straw. We're headed over to Chapter 7, where the plagues show up. But we pause in chapter 6. We pause to make sure that everybody reading has a good handle on who Moses is and who Aaron is. It's written like this; I'm giving this to you

so you know that this Moses and this Aaron have legitimacy. It's here to show the credentials of the man who is going to lead the people of God out of Egypt. It's here to give credentials to the man who's going to be the mouthpiece for Moses. So that's why it's here. That's why the author put it there but how do you preach it? Like, if you're a preacher, and you come to this passage and you wonder, what do I do with it? Is it any good for us? Should I skip it? But Paul says in Romans 15:4, whatever is written in former days was written for our instruction that we might have hope. The reason this genealogy is here, as bizarre as it seems, is to give you and me hope. So, if that's the case, then what do we learn? I'll give you an overarching phrase for the sermon.

### Because You Belong to Christ, You Always Have Hope

I should have said it like this: if you belong to Christ, you always have hope. Let me show you a couple of things in this passage. It's a storyline, and there are some interesting things to point out. I'll come back and then make some application about God and why we should have hope. Join me there in verse 14. We find out that this is written here about families. Family is important. These are the heads of their father's houses. So this is going to be listing Jacob's sons. Remember Jacob, he is renamed Israel, and his sons are the 12 Tribes of Israel. So what Moses does here is he just lists off the first three, he starts with Reuben. And then after Reuben, in verse 15, he gives us Simeon, and then we get to Levi. Levi is the one where he's going to expand the whole rest of the genealogy. So it starts in on Levi and pretty soon, down in verse 20, we find a detail that you wouldn't expect to get. <sup>20</sup> *Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister.* It's a weird name, but it's the very first time we have Yahweh in the name. And that name means the glory of the Lord. So Amram takes as his wife, Jochbed, who is his fathers sister. Well, that's weird. If you're reading that, you ought to just think, let me read that again. What's going on here in this passage? That's a little odd that Moses tells us there. If you keep coming down the page to verse 21, you see those names, and your eye gets hung up on the name, Korah. Well, if you go down to the bottom of your Bible, if you have an apparatus, a study Bible, it's going to tell you over in

chapter 16 that there is this terrible rebellion and Korah and his family are sucked into the earth. That's a terrible thing. Keep reading here, and you come to verse 23 and we find out about Aaron. He takes a wife and I want you to see that Aaron has some children. But two of his children are so bad, (look, if you've been a good parent and you got bad children, take some heart in this) they are so bad that God just kills them. You read about that in Leviticus, chapter 10. That's an odd thing to put in this passage. And if you keep reading, you come to verse 25, and there you find a man named Phinehas. Phinehas is so aggressive and so brutal, when he finds two people having adultery and the adulterers are caught in the very act, he takes a spear and drives it all the way through the both of them. That's a wild thing to have here in this passage.

And then you get to verses 26-29 and he brings us back to Moses. He says, this is here so you understand. This is the real thing. This is Moses and this is Aaron. If that's the case, what then do we learn? What things do we learn that might give us some hope here this morning? Here's the first one, number one.

### **God's word is true**

When you read this genealogy, what you find out is that God's word is true. Sometimes, when I'm reading a biography, I can tell by the way it is written that the biographer likes the person they're writing about because they'll overlook some of the really bad things about them. But the Bible is given to us in an unvarnished truth. Like there are no secrets. The Bible always gives us an unvarnished picture of our heroes. Why would Moses, who is writing this, have to list the detail about his dad, who's married to his mom, that happens to also be his aunt. That's an odd Thanksgiving dinner to show up to. He puts that in and then later on in Exodus and Leviticus, this very union is outside of the bounds of God's law. And yet he includes that here in his family tree. When you read about Abraham, you find all the terrible things that he did. He is cowardice, telling another king that his wife was his sister. Or think of Isaac and Jacob. Go read about Jacob and his lies and those mandrakes they're passing around. You talk about a dysfunctional family. Or read about Moses

being a murderer and a coward, or Aaron, who will create a golden calf. Go read the book of Judges and all the leaders there. In first and second Samuel we'll come to David, the one we love so much, and look at his life. Or you get to the New Testament, read about Peter.

And the reason I point all of this out is to say the Bible is history and facts and God's word. If that's the case, then you can trust it. If that's the case, you should know it better than you do right now. You have ample reasons at your fingertips, ample supplies to get hold of God's word. You've got the Bible, probably in your home, in 3 or 4 versions of the English language. There's no reason you can't know what God says. You can know it. You can trust it, learn it, and obey it. Why? Because in the Bible, what we find out is God's law. We're going to get there in Exodus 20. God's law tells us that we stand condemned under God, but God's gospel and the New Testament tells us we can be saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus and what Christ has done through his righteous life, his atoning death, and his victorious resurrection. When I read this genealogy, it reminds me that God's word is true. Let me give you a second thing, number two.

### **God saves by grace**

Here's what I mean. If you have in your mind that Christianity is you changing your life and start doing right, and because you start doing right, if you do enough things right, then God's going to let you into heaven, that if you are a good enough person, you're going to quit all that terrible stuff, you're going to start living right, and then God's going to let you into heaven - that is you trying to perform good enough to get into heaven and you'll never do it. The very best day of your life, the best 10 seconds of your life would never be good enough to get you into the portals of a holy God in heaven. So we need grace. We need him to give that to us. How does he do it? God reaches down with his son, Jesus. He sends him to live perfectly. There's not anything righteous about us. The reason I get this out of this passage is that there are so many terrible things in it. Verse 14 tells us that the firstborn of Jacob was a man named Ruben. If you go read his story, Ruben has an affair with his dad's

concubine. Now there are a couple of things wrong with that story. One is that dad's got a concubine, and then Ruben is with her. Or you go and read verses 15 and 16. You have got Simeon and Levi. Simeon and Levi became so outraged, they became so mad, that they killed an entire village of men to avenge their sister. You have Korah, in his rebellion. We talked about Moses, dad and marrying his aunt. And Moses was a murderer. We read all of these names and we are reminded that no one is righteous. Not one. Not you. Not me. If Moses, who is described as the most humble man to ever live, if Moses was a sinner, then guess who else is a sinner, you and me. And we, because we are not righteous, we actually need the righteousness of another. There is only one who is fully righteous. It's not Adam and Eve, our father and mother. It's Jesus Christ, the son of God, who is fully and completely holy, and then lives a full, complete, holy, righteous life. It's good for us to know the gospel; that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us. It's true. Jesus died on the cross for us to take away the wrath of God. But that's not all he did. Jesus also lived for you in a completely righteous way. And in order for you to be saved, you need more than just the wrath of God turned away. That means the sin is taken away. You need more than that. You need the active righteousness of Jesus so that when God looks at you, it's not a blank slate. He sees the perfect life of Christ. The phrase is imputed righteousness. Here's what God does when you trust that Jesus lived perfectly and died for you. God puts Christ's righteousness on you. We need the righteousness of Christ. That means being saved by grace. When I read this genealogy, and I see all these terrible people, I remembered that the Bible is true, and I remember that God saves us by grace. Let me give you a third thing to consider, number three.

### **God uses people and saves individuals**

So I have eight points here. I did have 9 but I was trying to economize it a little, I'm trying to do a little DOGE action on my sermon so what I did was I put two points together. I was going to go, number three, God uses people and number four, God saves individuals. But I put them together for you to make it more efficient. Let me show you why. When you read the Old Testament account in the book of Exodus, we find out very quickly that God

knows names. The Bible tells us the midwives' names who saved Moses. When you read the book of Ezra, you'll come across the genealogy of Ezra. You'll find another one over in Nehemiah. You get to the first chronicles and you'll think, this list is never going to end. All of these names. Why are they here? It's because God fulfills his plan through individual people. Through you. You are a part of God's plan. When you pick up those Easter invite cards and you put it in the hand of somebody else, you are acting as an individual on behalf of God. If you are a Christian right now, you have given your life to Christ, the chance is that you actually became a Christian because somebody talked to you. Somebody shared the gospel with you. Somebody invited you to church. We're talking about God loving people. God does love people. God loves the body of his people. God loves his church. But let's not forget that God loves individuals. There was a song that we used to sing and I never did really like it because I thought it missed the mark theologically. But one of the lines was, when he was on the cross, I was on his mind. And I used to think, that's not really true. When Christ was on the cross, he was thinking about the glory of God. He was thinking about the atonement. But the truth of the matter is, if he died for people, then he had a name in mind.

When you go to Revelation, you get to the Book of Life. There are names written there. When Jesus died for you, he didn't just die for people, it was your name. God knows names, not generalities. When you're a parent, you've learned how to pray for a name. You're asking God very specifically. One of the things you see in this genealogy is that God has names, names that Christ died for. Look, when we pray, what do we pray? Not in general. We don't just pray for the lost. We pray for individual people by name. God does use people and he saves individuals. That the third one, let me give you a fourth.

### **God loves the family**

This whole list is just a listing of the family that starts off with the head of the household. There's a household, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. And then under Levi, all it is is talking about families. This reminds us, from God's word, how important the family is. That when God created Adam and Eve and put them

in a garden, he told them to be fruitful and multiply, to be a family. This is why it hurts for those of you that have been through divorce. Even if you tried your hardest to stop it but the family comes apart. This is why it hurts so bad. Or if you are a part of a dysfunctional family or something terrible happened in your family, this is why it hurts so bad. Because God gave us the family as the foundation of a society. It's what holds the church together. Man, if you see a healthy family, and you have a kid coming out of that family, there's a good chance that they grew up in a loving home and so they learn to be secure. They learn to have some confidence that they are loved and taken care of. They learn to be strong in their convictions.

When you read Ephesians, Chapter 5, the family displays the gospel and the dad is loving his family like Christ does the church, and mom is submitting to that leadership. Now a lot of you sitting here are saying that's great, but I'm single. I'm not in a family. My family was torn apart. I came up with a terrible family. It's then so much more important for you to be in God's family, the church. When people said to Jesus, your mom and your brothers and sisters are out here, Jesus said who are my mother, my brothers and my sisters? My family is right here. There is something about being together in the body of Christ. A family of God is going to minister to your soul.

I've been trying to memorize Colossians 1 and I'm having trouble with the very end of it; it's just real wordy. One of the things that Paul says is, <sup>24</sup> *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.* Right here, this is your family. When you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ and you trusted that Christ died for you, you immediately were adopted into the family of God and have hundreds of brothers and sisters in Christ right here. God loves the family. Do everything you can to protect your family. Make your home, the church, where you are leading, that you are investing in, that you are protecting, make the sacrifices for your children to keep the family together. Look, and if you're a single parent and you're having to do double time, pour yourself here. God loves family. I'm gonna give you a fifth one, number five.



## God is unimpressed by rank

Here's what I wish I had said. God is unimpressed. Period. God is completely unimpressed. It's sort of like you guys act when I tell you I'm the President of the Southern Baptist Convention, unimpressed, 100%. God is unimpressed with rank. Where do I get that? When you read this story, what you find out is that Moses isn't the firstborn. Aaron is the firstborn. He should have been the leader, but he's the mouthpiece. Moses is the leader. God uses the one who says, I can't talk very well. When you read the Bible, there is Jacob, who is Israel. People of Israel are the 12 tribes of Jacob's sons. Ruben is the firstborn, but God chooses Levi, the third born. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. <sup>26</sup> *Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.* <sup>27</sup> *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.* God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. Think of it now. Think of Christ. Think of Jesus in all of his glory emptying himself, and giving himself over to become a servant, even to the point of death and death on a cross. God is not impressed with rank. You know who he's impressed with, Christ. And when you are in Christ, then he sees you with that righteousness. Let me give you a sixth point, number six. What do you learn from this passage? When you read this genealogy, you find out that...

## God hates rebellion

You see that in verse 21. There is a name, Korah. The description of Korah is found over in Numbers 16. There in Numbers 16, after Korah has rebelled against God and against Moses, we are told that the earth swallowed him and his family up and dropped them into hell. And that same fate awaits all of those who rebel against God. You, right now, are standing on a trap door that has a really light trigger. And all of us, like rebels, deserve to be dropped and yet, the gospel has come. You've trusted the gospel. We are told that God has given us one who will take away all of our punishment. One who will come and rescue us from off of that trap door and put us on solid ground. The one,

Jesus, who died on the cross in our place. God raised him from the dead and this reminds us that God hates rebellion, but God loves us in Christ, the perfect son. That's the sixth. Let me give you a seventh.

### **God takes worship seriously**

That's down in verse 23. We're introduced to Nadab and Abihu. So if you're reading in the book of Leviticus, there are lots of strange things in Leviticus. But one thing you'll find in Leviticus chapters 8 and 9, are instructions on how to worship. Then, in chapter 10 of Leviticus, we find Aaron's sons, turned into the priest, his sons offered up to the Lord what is called strange fire. We don't know what that is but whatever it is, it kills them. It was something sinful, something innovative, something provocative, something self-centered, something transactional, something offered in worship to get something back. I'll worship you if you'll give me this. One of the reasons that we take worship so seriously here at Hickory Grove is that we believe in the holiness of God, and we have no right to be in the presence of God, except because of the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. So, everything we offer to God is done with sincerity. Look, you can be serious and be joyful. Being serious does not mean being solemn. Being serious means we put an intensity and intentionality into what we do. Why? Because our souls need that.

You have to be careful too, about how you talk about worship. We used to talk about it in a way that people would say when they came to church, I didn't get anything out of that. And you might say, well, you didn't come to church to get anything, you came to church to give. You ought to be giving in worship. That preaches pretty good, but it's not the whole truth. The truth is, I've come to receive. I've come to get something today. I come so that my soul might be satisfied in Christ. You come to church and worship on the Lord's Day, with God's people so that your conscience might be freed because Christ died for your sins, taking them away, and you are forgiven. You come here to get your confidence restored and to know that God is going to see you through it. You come here and have your mind cleansed. We live in a terrible, filthy world, and you come here and you're told the truth of

God, and it cleanses your mind. You come here and you have reconciliation between you and God because of what Christ has done on the cross, and it makes it so that you are reconciled to the people around you. You come here to get your Christianity confirmed. It is true. You come here and get your faith renewed. You come here on the first day of the week, Sunday is the first day of the week, you come here for worship to get your week started right. There is intentionality in that. So if you're going to be serious about worship there are a couple of things you might do. Here's the first one, be on time. Be ready and engaged. Be prepared, engage and worship. What we have up here when we sing together, this is not a performance. This is our worship leaders helping us worship so that we sing unto the Lord. There ought to be an expression of joy in your worship. You give yourself to the Lord and ask God to give you joy because if you belong to Christ, you always have hope. That's seven, I have one more, number eight.

### **God redeems sinners**

There are so many sinners in there. You need to stay with me to get this. So when you read this pedigree, this pedigree shows us the priestly line of Aaron. That's where it starts. Come down to verse 23. Verse 23 says, <sup>23</sup> *Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon.* So Amminadab and Nahshon are both ancestors of King David. They are found in Matthew 1:4, when you see the genealogy of Christ that proves his royalty and his kingship. But right here, you see Aaron in the listing of the Levites and that is there in show us his priestly nature. We look out there and we see, at the cross, there's a line on the King's side and a line on the priestly side. They run together and they meet at the cross, and there he is, our prophet, priest and King, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And through his perfect life, his atoning death, and his resurrection, you and I have hope because when you belong to Christ, brothers and sisters, you always have hope.

*(Pastor prays)*