

The Heart of God, Part 2

Exodus 34:6-7; Coast Community Church; Dan Rupprecht; 7/04/2021

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." Ex. 34:6-7

Why this text?

In this story, God lets us see into his heart for His people Israel, even when they sinned grievously in the matter of the golden calf. We see how He is faithful, even when they don't trust Him. We see how He delights to show mercy, even when His justice provokes Him to anger. We see how He hears and responds favorably to the intercessory prayers of a righteous man, Moses. We see how He desires to stay with His people on their journey, to pardon their sin and to make them His own. And as the story of God's heart for His people unfolds through the Old Testament, it provides the framework for us to see in the New Testament, the truest picture of God's heart for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Compassionate

This is *Rehkem*, the Hebrew word for "womb". It conveys deep emotion and is centered on a person's core. Imagine a mother's tender feelings for her vulnerable infant. It also conveys action, like when God hears the cries of the Israelites suffering as slaves in Egypt and He rescues them. When Jesus comes on the scene, He is God's deep compassion, *oiktirmos* become human.

Gracious

The word *khen* is often translated grace or favor. It can mean "delightful" or "favorable". Like in Psalms 45:2 where the skilled poet is said to have lips of grace. Or when a dazzling piece of jewelry is an ornament of grace, (Pr. 1:9). The strongest expression of grace is showing favor to someone instead of giving them what they deserve. Like when Jacob asks Esau, "may I find grace in your eyes" (Ge. 33:8). No one in the bible shows more grace than God. The New Testament tells us that Jesus is God's *Kharis*, "gracious gift" become human.

Slow to Anger

The Hebrew phrase *erek 'apayim* is literally "long of nose", in contrast to the common way of saying that someone is angry, "their nose burns hot", describing how your face gets hot when you're filled with anger. This is why a patient person is called "long of nose". It takes a long time for their noses to get hot. God doesn't have a nose, but He is slow to anger, which means he gives people lots of time to change. Paul says in Romans 1:18-32 that God's anger is being revealed against human evil. But it also says that God is patient, giving people time to come to their senses and change.

Who are these people? Gods' heart toward his own vs. his heart toward his enemies

...they are an obstinate people...let me alone that I may destroy them (Ex. 32:9,10)

Where is God? The significance of God's presence. Jesus is "God with us". The abiding Holy Spirit.

...My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest (Ex. 33:14)

What is God's name? The significance of God's name and the value of identity.

...I have known you by name...I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you (Ex. 34:17,19)

Loyal Love

This phrase translates the Hebrew word *Khesed*, which combines the ideas of love, generosity, and enduring commitment. It describes an act of promise keeping loyalty that is motivated by deep personal care. Like in the story of Ruth, who cares for her widowed mother-in-law rather than returning to her people after her own husband dies. Her devotion is an expression of loyal love. The one who shows the most loyal love in the bible is God! Like in the story about the treacherous liar Jacob, when he says to God, "I'm not worthy of all the loyal love You've shown me", (Exodus 32:10). God is loyal and loving for no other reason than it's just who God is! After centuries of Israel betraying their commitment to God, and after humanities long history of violence and death, God still kept His promise in a dramatic way by becoming human and binding Himself to us in the person of Jesus, the ultimate loyal and loving human.

Faithfulness

The Hebrew word *emet* can be translated faithfulness or truth. It's related to the word A-men, which is an untranslated Hebrew expression meaning, "that's truth". When used of people, it refers to reliable or stable character, or trustworthiness. Like when Moses appoints leaders in Israel (Ex. 18:21), they are to be faithful men who are trustworthy, who won't take bribes or distort justice. God is faithful and trustworthy. This why Moses calls God a rock, saying that He is faithful, just and upright. But when the Israelites come to the promised land and find it filled with giants, their trust in God's faithfulness fails. But eventually we find an Israelite who does trust God in the face of giants. And the bible says that David walked in faithfulness before God. So David considers God to be faithful and responds with faithfulness. God promises to raise up a faithful descendant of David whose kingdom will endure forever. This faithful king will become the source of stability for others, forever. Or as Paul says (Ro. 15:8-9), "Jesus came on behalf of God's faithfulness".

How deep does God's heart go?

...keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...

Generational accountability and the contrast between God's mercy and justice

...but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

Has God's heart changed? How does God's heart seen in Exodus 34 compare to Christ's heart for us? *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14*

How should we respond?

- Worship-
- Trust-
- Obey-
- Rest-

I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness with all my heart and with all my soul. Jeremiah 34:41