

The Threat of Life (Lesson #5)

The Embrace of God's Grace

Exodus 33:18-34:10

Background story:

- A. Moses was a pretty tough customer (Ex. 32:1-6 golden calf incident)
- B. God has responded with a fierce anger against Israel (Ex. 32:35)!
 - 1. Expect- Moses would have fallen on his face, groveling and pleading with the Lord.
 - 2. He doesn't- He says they're stiff-necked people. (and bargains with God- **33:12-16**)
 - a. God tells Moses that those who were disobedient would be blotted of His book.
 - b. God has told Moses to lead the people into the Promised Land, without Him,
- C. Moses does pretty good up until this moment-- he then says, Now show me your glory (**33:18**)!
 - 1. But He doesn't let Moses go that far or to see that far into the mystery of God.
 - a. So God answers him and says: You can see my back (**33:21-34:10**).
 - 2. Notice: Bible gives no real attention- backside of God's glory nor what Moses saw.
 - 3. Rather, the Bible focuses instead upon what God said and what Moses heard.

Here's what God says to Moses: **34:6-7a**.

6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

- A. Wow! What a mouth full about the identity of God
 - a. Here's the sum of our faith!
 - b. The substance of a radical understanding of grace.
 - c. It's here that the Bible shows us its core:
 - The Bible is concerned with **healing, reconciliation** (restoring) & **forgiveness**
- B. All of the words of Israel's faith are found here.
 - a. Words we Christians claim we have seen in Jesus
 - In an adequate way these words are synonymous with
 - Mercy •graciousness •steadfast love •faithfulness •forgiveness.

God is for us! - for us all!

- b. God really wants this relationship to work with Israel and with all of us.
- c. What we are seeing here is something most wondrous and most odd about God.

The words of the Bible tell the truth about God.

It tells the truth

- That has been so from before the beginning of time.
- That drives the gospel.
- About God, therefore about humanity, and therefore it tells the truth about us!

- C. Life in God consists in "Yes" from God (2 Cor. 1:19)!
 - 1. What amazes me is that we have God's "yes" even though we are tempted with sin.
 - Greed •Selfishness •Self-centeredness •Lust •Idolatry •Covetousness
 - 2. This "yes" of God's gospel is given here to Israel, one word at a time
 - 3. No doubt Moses must have heard and watched with great amazement!

- If we watch & listen, we too will be amazed-- if we listen carefully.

Note well

A. When God says these things to Moses, Israel's not on its best day. **(They sinned greatly)**

1. So God's not done talking with Moses (v.34:7b).

*, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. **Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.**"*

B. This second half of God's identity is more than a mouthful- it's heavy-duty- **Conversation stopper!**

1. I bet things got pretty quiet for Moses
 - God just finished talking about grace upon grace- Then He changes direction mid-stream
2. He speaks about bringing His people together and then speaks with this new unaccommodating tone.

God uses much different words here •Guilty •Iniquity •Punishment

- God moves from this language of grace to a severe language of anger and punishment

C. These rules & laws & commands & expectations expressed by God-- He expects to see.

1. God's desires about what He wants are not vague (as we see at Sinai).

God is- •Purposeful •Intentional •And will not be mocked!

Here's my question: How does Moses/how do we hold all this stuff together.

- When you boil it down, we see a deep contradiction. (we want and can harmonize it)
 1. But the fact is when God thinks about Israel's well-being, there is forgiveness.
 2. But when God thinks about God being God as God does, there's no mocking!

It's a God for us! And a God for God's self!

It's sort of like a parent's love for their teenager (inpatients and anger) that erupt

God, on this day, on this mountain with Moses, lets it all hang out. For all of this belongs to God.

Watch Moses:

A. Moses sees plan A vv.6-7a pretty clearly (God is graciousness) How marvelous.

- But plan B v.7b he notices it's pretty tough! **Plan B will destroy Israel**

- So Moses asks God (**vv. 8-9**) to go with this stiff-necked people and to forgive!

This is a Powerful Truth!-- God who graciously embraces and the God of uncompromising demand!

- Can't hate yourself enough (for grace)
- Can't have enough warm fuzzies (to override God as being God)

Here's the point-- I know you expect me to show you that grace wins the day... and it does.

A. It doesn't mean God ceases to be the God of uncompromising demand (an awesome untamedness)

To believe that because God embraces us (graciousness), He does away with his uncompromising demand is an attempt to stop God from being God. I suggest that this understanding is more dangerous than God's uncompromising demand!

B. Many have abused this reality (and use the anger of God to control others- may we never do so!)

1. But notice that Moses nor the Bible explain away the tough demands of God.

- Ah... But we do see Moses doing something:

- Moses steps into the world of God and seeks to leverage God.

- He worships all of God- His Graciousness & His Uncompromising demand (and then asks God for A) v. 9

Watch God: He responds this time with Moses out of plan A (v. 10) without this Israel has no future.

Does this remind you of someone?: For us it's no different.

Moses is only the shadow of what was to come.

Luke 23-34

It appears, evidently that salvation was not predetermined that day.

It appears that in Jesus' response to Peter, Jesus had the option to call down thousands of angels.

Jesus petitions the Lord to exercise plan A. (The Embrace of God's Grace!)

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