

Grace

Turning Toward Grace

“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 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,”

- Exodus 34:5-6

“Is God a God of grace?” “Is God just?” “Will God forgive me, for all I’ve done?” These are fair questions. And how can we answer this for ourselves and others? Who should we go to ask? I would say – go to the source. God defines Himself as gracious. God defines Himself as abounding in love and faithfulness. These verses are not from the new testament, rather, this Scripture is found in the older testament book of Exodus.

Keep Going. This Exodus verse comes at a time when Israel was not being faithful to God. They failed. If you read the beginning of Exodus 34, you will see that Moses is being instructed to ‘chisel out two stone tablets like *the first ones...*’ Why are these tablets not the original ones? Well, while Moses was seeking instruction from God, the people had already returned to their old ways and were worshipping an idol, a golden calf. It didn’t take long for Israel to stray. And if you think Israel was strange to worship something they made with their own hands, I will suggest we are also prone to worship and prioritize unworthy things that aren’t nearly as great as God.

Even though the people had gone astray so quickly, God brought Moses up a second time to provide guidance. And rather than berate and shame Moses and the people of God, God graciously revealed who He was – compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love, faithful. God is still all these things, to you and to me. God is the same yesterday, today, forever. We need to know this deep down. We will not always do the right thing. We may not always feel great. And it helps to know how God acts, thinks, and feels about us. Keep going.

Keep Discovering. Self-defining moments for God happen again and again in Scripture. God wants us to know who He is. What He is about. Yes, there is always more to God than we will grasp. And there may be things about God, or things that happen in life, that we don’t understand. This is not Heaven, so we may not always have a satisfactory answer, and some things in this life will not be as we wish. When these times come, I encourage you to keep discovering more of God. Keep remembering who God is and how God describes Himself. Sometimes, we must trust in God’s grace. Remember that He is good. And let God be God.

It may be that we need to give ourselves some grace as we try to come to a better understanding of God. It may take some time, some research in biblical commentaries, sound web resources, or other believers, as we struggle to understand some of the harder parts of Scripture. As we read the very next verse, it seems a little contradictory to ‘grace’:
“Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” - Exodus 34:7

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Huh? How does this fit with the previous verse? I encourage you-keep discovering. Dig into the Word. A very brief explanation would be to say that God forgives freely all who repent. Yet, God is also just, so the phrasing of this verse conveys that God may hold accountable the one who does not turn from doing evil in this world and repent. Feel free to investigate this further. If you have a tough case as a vet, will you not try to investigate, to find an answer if possible? The same goes for our journey with God – keep seeking, keep discovering.

Keep Turning. We will continue to discover more and more about God as we grow in our faith. It is awesome that there will be more to discover about God as we walk through this life. And this should not surprise us. Who knows everything there is to know about veterinary medicine, in such a way that there is no more to learn or discover? No one. How much grander is God?

Turn to God and all His goodness. Acts 3:19 invites us to *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”* Sins wiped out. Times of refreshing. This is all for our good. Accept God’s grace and repent of any sin that crops up in your life. The word ‘repent’ means ‘to turn.’ Let us focus on what we are turning *towards* and not what we are turning *from*.

We are turning *toward* a gracious, loving God who is fully faithful to us. Often, whether deserved or not, images of Christianity are characterized by what we are ‘against’ and not what we are ‘for.’ Jesus invites us to turn toward Him and His loving arms. Keep turning and looking upon your loving God. Don’t dwell on what you are turning from. Leave the past in the past, and commit to turning toward God and His grace, every time.

- **What first drew you to God? Why do you continue to follow Him?**
- **What is something about God or the Bible that was challenging to understand? What helped you to find an answer?**
- **How would you define ‘grace’? What is an example of ‘grace’ that you have experienced?**



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