

A person with a backpack is walking away from the viewer on a narrow, stone path that leads through a massive, swirling storm of dark green and blue water. The path is illuminated from above, creating a bright, glowing tunnel effect. The water is turbulent and appears to be crashing against the path's edges.

EXODUS

DRAWING US OUT | CALLING US IN

Part 11 How can the LORD forgive?

Exodus 33:1-6

The LORD said to Moses, "Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your offspring I will give it.'² I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

⁴When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.⁵For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'" ⁶Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

Depart... but I will not go up among

you: The LORD is not annihilating/destroying Israel but He is not going to be in their midst either. Why? He is Holy and Just and they are ungodly people who refuse to adopt His ways. How will this relationship be reconciled? How can God forgive these people after what they have done?

you are a stiff-necked people: This term is descriptive of work animals like oxen, horses or mules who resist being harnessed to do the will of their human master. It's oppositional stubbornness. It's an unwillingness to subordinate or to become teachable. To spiritually be a stubborn mule is to be regularly resisting God's voice and direction.

disastrous word, they mourned: Are they surprised with God's plan to detach from them? This is the first sign of remorse, sorrow, or repentance we have seen in the narrative. It is accompanied by a social sign commanded by God: They are to take off their ornaments as a sign of their humility and willingness to follow God's ways. They do it.

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.

⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent.

⁹ When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses.

¹⁰ And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door.

Exodus 33:18-19

Moses said, "**Please show me your glory.**" ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Exodus 34:1-2

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. ² Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain.

tent and pitch it outside the camp:

What a picture of God's "social distancing" Himself from the people, making the point that morally/ethically He can't be in their midst. They need to know how corrupt they have become and that there are serious consequences for their sins. God makes Himself evident in the cloud as He comes to meet with Moses his chosen mediator. Look at how the people act as Moses goes out to the tent. As families they worship at the entrance to their homes. What a change of heart this is compared to days earlier when they worshipped an idol.

Please show me your glory: Moses boldly asks for more revelation of God's power and glory. God promises to do this and His rationale is this: It's My choice to be gracious and merciful to those whom I desire to be gracious.

I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious: Here God is telling Moses that He is not obligated to be gracious with any person, but that He can and does choose to be gracious and show mercy to those He chooses to do so. Apostle Paul in Romans 9:14-21 will quote this statement as he explains God's election of those He will show mercy and those He will harden (Pharaoh). Some would say it like this: God is ready to show mercy to anyone who will sincerely ask for mercy.

two tablets: God is letting Moses know that He is remaking the covenant that was broken. Many of the instructions for this covenant-making parallel what was done earlier in ch. 23 when the first covenant was made. However this time the voice of God will not be heard by all the people and significantly, God will reveal the essence of His character and nature.

Exodus 34:5-10

⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ 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, ⁷ 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."⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. ⁹ And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."¹⁰ And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.

a God merciful and gracious: Yahweh verbally reveals His divine nature to Moses. Israel needs to know this about God, just as we do today. This passage gives us an essential revelation of the name, the character, the moral nature and heart of God. First He is morally compassionate and gracious (compare also 33:19: 'And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and show compassion to whom I will show compassion'). He will show this mercy and graciousness to Israel by not punishing them (as they deserve), and instead choosing to show them undeserved mercy and forgiveness.

slow to anger: Literally, 'long of' anger, that is, His anger prolongs itself and is not quick to inflict punishment on the sinner, in order that he may repent.

abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness: Steadfast love and faithfulness are dual elements of a unitary quality— loving-kindness. He keeps, with complete faithfulness, His promises to show loving-kindness even for thousands of generations, to the distant descendants of those to whom the promises were made.

forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: To cover the entire range of wrongdoing God uses these three terms. Of highest importance is the revelation from God that (since the beginning) he can and does forgive people of grave sin. In fact, He makes a way for us to gain mercy.

but who by no means clear the guilty: God's love and grace, are not signs of weakness and do not imply permissiveness or a perversion of justice. Iniquity has grave consequences and God's mercy does not extend to all. And, sin is not completely expunged by mercy; there is a price to be paid that even an animal sacrifice will not cover (otherwise Christ would not have to come and die).

Moses bowed: Having heard the revealed character of the LORD (gracious and merciful on those He chooses, forgiving iniquity) Moses bows and then can pray: pardon us stiff-necked people of our iniquity and our sin and take us for your inheritance and be in our midst.

I will do marvels: God unilaterally commits Himself to Israel's future. They will see Him act in ways that have never happened to any other people. He will take them into the land and give them prosperity and peace. It will be evident that it is His awesome work. These people are His treasure and inheritance.

Resources quoted, used and adapted for these notes and the sermon:

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- Sermons by Ligon Duncan.
 - Enns, P. (2000). Exodus. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
 - Cassuto, U. (1997). A Commentary on the Book of Exodus. (I. Abrahams, Trans.). Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

How was the LORD able to forgive Israel?

How does He forgive us?

1. Israel came to understand / acknowledge their corruption:

^{33:3} Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.

⁷ Now Moses used to take the **tent and pitch it outside the camp**, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting.

2. Israel came to understand remorse, repentance and heart examination.

^{33:4} When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. ⁵ For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'" ⁶ Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

3. Israel came to understand the LORD's character:

^{34:6} 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, ⁷ 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."

a. He is Merciful (His choice).

b. He is Just (His obligation)

c. He does forgive (Our only hope).

4. There is a way to ask God for forgiveness:

⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.

⁹ And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

5. What is the heart response from someone pardoned who does not deserve a pardon?

Next Sunday, March 22, 2020: Part 12 "The Glory of God"

Pastor Travis Marsh finishes our series in "Exodus".