

Summer Sermon Series: It's Worth Repeating

“the LORD, the LORD”

(Exodus 34:6)

Introduction

➤ Today, many people have the view that God does not really care about sin. They wrongly presume that He is too busy (or should be too busy) ruling the universe to be concerned about how they live their lives. They like to think of their personal sins as “not that bad”, “not deserving of God’s judgment”, especially not compared to worse sins (people) in the world. They like to pretend that they are “basically good” (even though there is ample evidence of the contrary), and that God has no right to interfere with their free choices and desires (“it’s really none of His business”).

In God’s Word, however, we find that God is not only concerned about our sin (and our sinful choices), but He has the authority (right) and power (might) to judge us personally for our sin.

Ps 7:11-13 ~ “God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. ¹²If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; ¹³he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.” (see Ps.5:5-6)

Ps 21:8-9 ~ “Your hand will find out all your enemies; your right hand will find out those who hate you. ⁹You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The LORD will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will consume them.”

➤ But still people reject to this understanding of God rationalizing, “That’s the Old Testament God.” In order to maintain a view of God that is more compatible with their worldly desires or religious philosophies, people idolatrously conjure up a false dichotomy of God (a false god) believing that He has grown soft and permissive – a god who no longer hates sin or punishes sinners. But as is revealed in the New Testament, God (who does not change, see Mal.3:6) still possesses a just and wrathful response to sin.

John 3:36 ~ “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Rom 2:5 ~ “...because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.”

Heb 10:26-27 ~ “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”

Heb 10:31 ~ “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

➤ Still clinging to a false paradigm (and false dichotomy) of God, some people will still insist, “That’s God, but that’s not Jesus. God is holy and just, but Jesus is loving and gracious.” And yet we see in Scripture that, as the Son of God, Jesus upholds God’s justice and will execute His judgment over sin and sinners.

Rev 19:15-16 ~ “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

John 3:18 ~ “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

John 5:22 ~ “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son”

Luke 12:4-5 ~ “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”

Matt 3:12 ~ [John the Baptist said of Jesus]: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

➤ In light of such Scriptures, it is important for us to note that the Bible also clearly and repeatedly refers to God as loving, merciful, and kind – in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament!

Isa 43:25 ~ “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

Isa 44:22 ~ “I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

➤ Upon hearing such great declarations of God’s forgiveness and grace, many people who reject God as just and wrathful will say, “That’s the God I like ... that’s the one that I want to believe in ... that’s my God!” So we’re left with the question, “Which ‘God’ is the God of the Bible?” “Which description most accurately portrays the one true God?” Does God have a holy hatred of sin, or does He have a gracious love for sinners? The answer is both! God is both completely holy (hating sin), and completely merciful (loving the sinner).

➤ Many people today want to characterize God as a kindly old grandfather who used to be uptight about sin and a strict disciplinarian, but now permissively tolerates sin and no longer condemns sinners. Truly, nothing could be further from the truth. For as God’s nature and character never changes (cf. Mal.3:6; Jms.1:17), so too His love of holiness and hatred of sin will never change (cf. 1Jn.3:4-6). Sin always has been, and will forever be, an unholy response and damnable offense to God – fully deserving His eternal wrath and punishment. But because of His great love, God has made a way for sinners to be saved and to know Him as their loving, gracious and merciful Father.

➤ This summer, for our “summer sermon series”, we are looking at consecutively repeated words in Scripture. Such repetition is intentional (similar to our putting words in bold or all-caps), and it serves to it calls special attention to the occasion or to the person – to the importance of what is about to happen and/or what is about to be stated. Such an emphasis is actually quite rare in the Bible – occurring only about 15 times throughout Scripture [not counting the 25 “Truly, Truly” statements from Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel].

So far, in this series, we have preached sermons on the repeated words of “*Abraham, Abraham!*” (Gen.22:11), “*Holy, Holy, Holy*” (Is.6:3), “*Moses, Moses!*” (Ex.3:4), “*Absalom, Absalom*” (2Sam.18:33), and “*Lord, Lord*” (Matt.7:21, 22; 25:11; Lk.6:46). Today, we are going to look that the only occurrence of the repeated phase “*the LORD, the LORD*” in all of Scripture.

➤ Our topic this morning drives us to a very unique, and incredibly important, passage of Scripture. In it, we find God proclaiming Himself as God and describing Himself as God. This passage represents God’s own self-disclosure, and is consequently repeated throughout Scripture (e.g., Neh.9:17, 31; Ps.86:15; 103:8; Jon.4:2; Joel 2:13).

Ex 34:1-10 ~ “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. ²Be 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. ³No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.’”

⁴So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. ⁵The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶The 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.'

⁸And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. ⁹And 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.' ¹⁰And 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.'"

➤ The context of Exodus 34, is the Lord calling Moses back to Mt. Sinai, for forty days and forty nights, for a second time (34:28). Moses had previously been to Mt. Sinai, for forty days and nights, when God gave him the Law (and other instructions) and established His covenant with Israel (24:18). The Israelites, having seen the overwhelming display of thunder and lightning, smoke and fire, and the sound of a trumpet from the top of the Mountain, were afraid to approach God (for fear that they would die) and asked Moses to relay to them what the Lord would say (20:18-21). Moses did so.

When Moses came down from the Mountain, having received the tablets of stone on which God had engraved the Ten Commandments (31:18), he found the Israelites worshipping a golden calf (32:1-24) – violating the Law they had just agreed to keep (24:3, 7). In anger, Moses broke the Ten Commandments (32:19).

After the Israelites were punished for their “*great sin*” (32:25-35), God commanded Moses to come back up to Mount Sinai (34:2) in which Moses would bring the newly cut tablets of stone for the Ten Commandments. Moses would stay on the mountain for forty days and nights, fasting from bread and water (34:28), where he would receive (again) the Ten Commandments written on the stone tablets by God Himself (34:28; see 31:18; 32:15-16).

➤ But before Moses would descend from the Mountain, God would meet with Moses in a most unusual way. It is during this sacred encounter that Moses heard the expression “*the LORD, the LORD*” from the LORD Himself (34:6). As we study this passage (vs.6-10) we can identify three aspects of God that comes from God’s own self-disclosure.

A. The name of God (Exodus 34:6)

➤ Most of the occurrences of repeated names in Scripture are from God to a person (“Abraham, Abraham”, “Moses, Moses”, “Simon, Simon”, “Saul, Saul”), or from a person to God (“Lord, Lord”, “my God, my God”). Exodus 34:6 is unique because it is the Lord God speaking to Moses about the Lord God: “*The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD ...”*”.

As is identified in most translations with the use of small/all caps, the Hebrew word translated “*the LORD*” is “Yahweh”, God’s self-given name. In this sense, it is His “real”, “proper”, and/or “personal” name.

✓ Note: In Biblical Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament), words were spelled with only consonants and no vowels. The word “Yahweh” is transliterated into four consonants YHWH – known as the Tetragrammaton (which simply means “the four letters”). In English, the word “Yahweh” (or Jehovah”) is used supplying vowels for the sake of pronunciation.

“*the LORD*” (Yahweh or Jehovah) =

➤ The Hebrew word translated “*the LORD*” (יהוה; *yahweh*; used almost 7,000 times in the Old Testament, and always of God) is derived from the word that means “*to be*” (הָיָה; *hayah*). When used of God it refers to Him being the self-existing, eternal God; that God – who was never created and will never die, who never changes, who is not bound by time/space – has always been and will forever be the I Am!

Exodus 3:13-15 ~ “Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’¹⁴ God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am [*hayah ... hayah*].’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am [*hayah*] has sent me to you.’¹⁵ God also said to Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD [*Yahweh/Jehovah*], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.’”

John 8:58-59 ~ “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am [*egō eimi*].’⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”

John 10:30-31 ~ “‘I and the Father are one.’³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.”

➤ In Exodus 34, we read that *“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD ...’*” (vs.6). The reason why He passed before Moses was because the Lord graciously agreed to let Moses see His glory:

Ex 33:12-23 ~ “Moses said to the LORD, ‘See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.’¹⁴ And he said, ‘My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’¹⁵ And he said to him, ‘If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?’”

“¹⁷And the LORD said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.’¹⁸ 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.²⁰ But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.’²¹ And the LORD said, ‘Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.’”

➤ The immediate result of Moses’ brief and obstructed glimpse of God (when God *“passed before him”*; 34:6) did not kill Moses, but it caused Moses’ face to radiate with light.

Ex 34:29-35 ~ “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them.³² Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

³⁴Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded,³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.”

2 Cor 3:12-18 ~ “Since we have such a hope, we are very bold,¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.¹⁵ Yes, to this day

whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

➤ Moses’ face was not “sunburned”; that is, it was not passively affected by God’s glory but actively reflecting the glory of the Lord (perhaps like seeing the reflection of the sun’s brightness off of a window or chrome bumper). Spurgeon suggested that “The face of Moses was to God what the moon is to the sun” (sermon, “The Shining Face of Moses”; 1890).

Physically speaking this was not a beautiful thing to behold, as we see that the Israelites were afraid to look at Moses (vs.30). Remember, if God had not protected Moses – keeping him from seeing God’s face, the fulness of God’s glory – Moses would not have survived (Ex.33:20; 1Tim.6:16; Heb.10:31; 12:28-29).

➤ It is in the context of God revealing His glory to Moses – allowing Moses to behold a (mere) sliver of the splendor of the radiance of God’s nature and character – that God declared Himself to be “*the LORD, the LORD*” – the one true, self-existing, eternal God!

B. The character of God (Exodus 34:6-7)

➤ God not only declared His name to Moses, He also declared His character:

Ex 34:6-7 ~ “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, ⁷keeping 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.’”

➤ While this was not the first time God revealed Himself in this way, we know that this particular passage is often cited throughout Scripture (see Neh.9:17, 31; Ps.86:15; 103:8; Jon.4:2; Joel 2:13). From it, we find seven amazing attributes of God – from God Himself!

1. Merciful ~ “*merciful*” (vs.6)

➤ To receive mercy is to be spared the just punishment that is due. It is particularly used in regard to giving someone kindness or compassion – forgiveness – when they do not deserve it. In this sense, referring to God’s mercy as undeserved is redundant. It is truly foolish to think or say, “I just want from God what I deserve.” For Scripture is clear that we all are sinners, who deserve God’s eternal condemnation (see Rom.3:10-12, 23; 6:23).

Ps 32:1-2 ~ “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity ...”

Ps 32:1-2 ~ “How blessed is the one whose rebellious acts are forgiven, whose sin is pardoned! ²How blessed is the one whose wrongdoing the LORD does not punish ...” (NET)

Ps 103:10 ~ “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”

➤ We are to be eternally grateful to Lord for His mercy – not giving us what we deserve. And, as we will see, God’s mercy does not negate His justice. It is not as though God just decided to let our sins go unpunished. God sent His Son who willingly paid the full penalty for our sin, through His substitutionary death on the cross. Jesus did not die for His own sins, because He was sinless. He died in our place and for our sins, bearing the punishment we deserved.

2 Cor 5:21 ~ “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Titus 3:5-6 ~ “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”

1 Peter 1:3-4 ~ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you”

➤ God is merciful in not treating us as our sins deserve. Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior, receive the full measure of God’s mercy because Jesus Christ received the full measure of God’s punishment for them.

2. Gracious ~ “*gracious*” (vs.6)

➤ Grace and mercy are near synonyms; often used interchangeably and often used together. For example:

Eph 2:4-5 ~ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved”

➤ There is, however, a helpful distinction between grace and mercy: Mercy is not getting what we deserve, and grace is getting what we do not deserve. Where mercy is the forgoing of deserved punishment, grace is the receiving of undeserved reward.

2 Cor 5:21 ~ “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Eph 2:8-9 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (see Gal.2:16; Tit.3:5; 2Tim.1:9)

Titus 3:7 ~ “so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

➤ Grace is a free gift. In fact, grace means free gift. As “undeserved mercy” is redundant, so is “free grace.” For if grace has to be earned or repaid, it is not grace (see Rom.11:6). Obviously, a “free gift” does not require payment of any kind.

God is gracious, which means He offers and extends grace – giving to us what we do not deserve. Namely, the free gift of salvation that comes to all who believe in Jesus Christ as God’s one and only Son, and one and only Savior.

Rom 6:23 ~ “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

John 1:16 ~ “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

3. Patient ~ “*slow to anger*” (vs.6)

➤ God is also patient – “slow” to execute His just wrath. God’s patience is a vital part of God’s mercy and grace. For if he were not patient with us, “waiting” for us to come to faith in Christ and enduring our disobedience and faithlessness, we could not be saved (see 2Pet.3:15, 20; 1Tim.1:16).

2 Peter 3:9 ~ “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

➤ In the Bible, God’s patience is often described in terms of slowness or length of time. Exodus 34:6 is translated “slow to anger” (ESV) or “longsuffering” (KJV). In other words, God is not quick-tempered nor does He have a “short-fuse.” He is not capricious, He does not “fly-off-the-handle”, and He does not have uncontrollable fits of rage.

- The Bible cautions us not to mistake God’s patience for His pardon (see Rom.2:4-5). The sentence of condemnation and eternal death hangs over every unrepentant sinner. If they should die, or the Lord should return, before they repent of their sinful life and receive Christ as their Savior they will surely face the eternal judgment and wrath of God.
- As is abundantly clear later in this passage, God being “*slow to anger*” does not mean that He is not angry or will not execute His wrath (see Ps.7:11; Rom.1:18; 2:5). It means when God does unleash His wrath upon sinners, He does so knowing that they have been given ample time and every opportunity to repent.

4. Loving ~ “*abounding in steadfast love*” (vs.6)

- The Old Testament (Hebrew) word translated “*steadfast love*” (*hesed*) is known as God’s covenant love [it is also translated “lovingkindness” (NASB), “loyal love” (NET), “faithful love” (HCSB), “goodness” (KJV), “love” (NIV)]. It is one of the richest and deepest words in all of Scripture. It denotes God’s kindness, mercy, and grace – all in one word. This “*steadfast love*” describes basis for God’s covenant with His people. It reveals that this covenant love is undying, unfailing, and unwavering, for it is not based on the performance/obedience of those whom God has saved but on the very promise that God has made.

Jer 31:3 ~ “... I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness [*hesed*] to you.”

Jer 31:3 ~ “... I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.” (NAS)

Jer 31:3 ~ “... I have loved you with an everlasting love. That is why I have continued to be faithful to you.” (NET)

Lam 3:22-23 ~ “The steadfast love [*hesed*] of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Psa 86:5 ~ “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love [*hesed*] to all who call upon you.”

Psa 103:11-13 ~ “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love [*hesed*] toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.”

Psa 136:1 ~ “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love [*hesed*] endures forever.” [“*His steadfast love endures forever*” repeated in all 26 verses of this Psalm]

- It is because of God’s covenant love that those who His children have the eternal security of salvation. For this love is indelibly rooted in His divine character; not in our goodness, good words, faithfulness, or obedience. It is God’s commitment to love those He has redeemed to the uttermost and for all eternity (“*abounding in steadfast love*”).

Eph 2:4-6 ~ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved”

Titus 3:4-5 ~ “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy,

Rom 5:8-9 ~ “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Rom 8:37-39 ~ “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

5. Faithful ~ “*abounding in ... faithfulness*” (vs.6)

➤ God is also faithful – actually “*abounding in ... faithfulness*” (vs.6). This refers to the fact that God is always trustworthy and always speaks the truth. It represents God’s reliability and integrity as One who not only does not lie (Num.23:19; Tit.1:2), but cannot lie (Heb.6:18). God’s faithfulness is connected to His holiness (He cannot sin), His immutability (He cannot change), and His omniscience (He knows all things).

God does not deceive, and He is never deceived. God does not sin, and never leads others to sin. He is never ignorant, confused, anxious, surprised, or mistaken. Consequently, God is absolutely and eternally faithful.

Lam 3:22-23 ~ “The steadfast love [*hesed*] of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Ps 108:4 ~ “For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.”

Ps 117:2 ~ “For great is his steadfast love [*hesed*] toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!”

Heb 10:23 ~ “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

➤ It must be noted that God’s own declaration of His faithfulness, in Exodus 34:6, comes right after Israel’s great sin of idolatry (worshiping the golden calf; Ex.32). Their faithlessness did not (in any way) diminish or destroy God’s faithfulness (He is “*abounding in ... faithfulness*”).

2 Tim 2:13 ~ “if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself.”

6. Forgiving ~ “*forgiving ...*” (vs.7)

➤ As if this were not enough already, God also declared Himself to be forgiving: “*forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*” (vs.7). Simply stated, God can forgive any and every sin. While there is no sin too small to need God’s forgiveness, there is also no sin too big that God cannot forgive. No one has, or can, out-sin God ability to forgive – no matter how many sins they have sinned.

➤ To illustrate this, God included three categories of offenses we commit against God (we find these in both the Old and New Testaments).

a) “*iniquity*” (*‘āwōn*)

This can refer specifically to that which is evil or perverse, oftentimes associated with a premeditated (conscious, willful) decision to rebel against God and His commands.

b) “*transgression*” (*peša*)

As the English translation of this Hebrew word signifies (lit. to go across, or to go beyond), a transgression is (often intentionally) going outside of God’s commands. It usually describes deliberate disobedience, especially against God’s laws.

c) “*sin*” (*ḥattā`t*)

In both the Old and New Testaments, the words most often translated sin means “to miss the mark.” It is used more generally to describe any act of disobedience (passive or active, ignorant or presumptuous, unintentional or intentional).

➤ God's Word declares that every person "has sinned" (Rom.3:23) and stands in need of God's forgiveness. Fortunately, God's Word also declares that every sinner can be forgiven in and through God's Son Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:7 ~ "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph.2:5; Col.2:13)

Isa 43:25 ~ "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (Heb.8:12)

Isa 44:22 ~ "I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you."

1 John 1:9 ~ "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

7. Just~ "*by no means clear the guilty ...*" (vs.7)

- The fact that God is merciful, gracious, and loving does not negate that He is also just. God is not ignorant of our sin, nor does He ignore our sin. God always acts rightly/righteousness, and He cannot tolerate sin or evil. As He Himself declared to Moses: "*who will by no means clear the guilty*" (vs.7). God must punish sin, or sanctify that which is unholy. Every sin will be accounted for.
- It can be troubling to read that God will be "*visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation*" (vs.7), but we must take this verse in context and in regard to the whole of Scripture. The Bible is clear that children are not punished for the sins of their parents (see Deut.24:16; Ezek.18:1-4; 19-32; Jn.9:1-3). It seems best to understand this verse as simply explaining the reality that children are negatively affected by their parent's sins, and that cycle can continue for generations.

It is important to note what God had already told Moses, when He first gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Notice the comparison to God's steadfast love being showed, not to three or four generations, but to thousands:

Ex 20:5-6 ~ "You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." (see Deut.7:9)

- Through His substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus Christ paid the fully penalty of the sins for all who would ever believe. God does not merely "clear" their sin, but has imputed their sin onto Christ, who bore that penalty on the cross (see Is.53:4-6; 2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.3:18).
- The main thing we must consider, when contemplating God's mercy and justice, the means of which God will deal with our sin. Are we going to stand before God as a sinner without a Savior, destined to pay the full penalty of our sins? Or are we – having received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and His sacrifice for our sins – going to stand before God completely forgiven? Simply put, either you will pay the penalty for your sins or Christ has paid the penalty for your sins – either way God is just!

C. The promise of God (Exodus 34:8-10)

- After hearing God's own self-revelation, Moses "*quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped*" (vs.8). That was the appropriate response. To truly know God is to worship Him. Digging deep into the knowledge of God ought to catapult us to the heights of worshipping God. Our goal is not merely to know things about God but to truly know God. The more we know about God, the greater our capacity to worship God.

- Then Moses said to the LORD, *“If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord [Adonay], please let the Lord [Adonay] 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”* (vs.9). Knowing himself, and knowing the Israelites – that they are prone to stubbornness and rebellion (see Ex.32:9; 33:3, 5; Acts 7:51) – Moses pleaded for God forgive their sins and enable them to receive their promised inheritance. By Moses’ own admission, they clearly do not deserve what he is asking for. Moses is humbly pleading for God’s grace and mercy.
- How did God respond to such a request? The LORD said to Moses: *“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”* (vs.10).

In this verse, we read that God reassured Moses of His faithful covenant with Israel; that He is able to fulfill His promise to His people and display His glory to the whole world. However, as we see in the following verses, this does not negate Israel’s responsibility to honor and obey the LORD (see vs.11-28). God also has given commands to His people, commands that are to be faithfully obeyed. As (true) Christians, we sincerely promise to obey the commands of the Lord. And, thankfully, the Lord has promised to forgive us when we fail. Whereas we stumble and fall, God will never stumble nor fall.

Conclusion

- This has always been true for God’s people, and will always be true for God’s people. God will always fulfill all the promises He has made. As Christians, those who have truly received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we can be assured of our salvation – because God said so!

1 Cor 1:8-9 ~ “who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Rom 8:28-30 ~ “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

Jude 24-25 ~ “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”