

Exodus 32-34

Introduction

- I. God reveals his character to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7
 - A. Compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love, forgiving sin
 - B. Punishing sin to the 3rd and 4th generations (probably referring to those who refuse to repent of their sin)
- II. Seeing God's statement about his mercy in its context makes the meaning come alive
As we read the story of God and the Israelites in Exodus, we see a people who are quick to wander from God and are stiff-necked, and we see a God who is slow to anger and willing to forgive much sin

The Passage

- I. Moses's imperfections as a leader and God's merciful response (ch. 3-4)
 - A. Moses has a series of excuses and reasons for not answering God's call (3:1, 3:13, 4:1, 4:10, 4:13)
 - B. God is gracious and patient with him
- II. The Israelites' imperfections as people, and God's merciful response
 - A. Red sea
 1. The people's complaint (Exodus 14:10-14)
 2. God's merciful response: he parts the Red Sea (Exodus 14:30-31)
 - B. Manna
 1. The people's complaint (Exodus 16:1-3)
 2. God's merciful response: he provides manna (16:4-15)
 - C. Water
 1. The people's complaint (Exodus 17:1-4)
 2. God's merciful response (Exodus 17:5-7)
- III. At Mt. Sinai
 - A. God's gracious covenant with Israel (Ex 19:3-6)
 1. He has chosen them as his treasured possession
 2. He has given them his commandments (10 commandments, Ex 20)
 - B. The people's rebellion (ch. 32)
 1. Moses on the mountain for 40 days
 2. The people get impatient and go back to the religious practices they were familiar with in Egypt (32:1-6)
 - a. A combination of Yahweh worship with the pagan worship of their past in Egypt (see v. 4-5). They want a god they can see, touch, and manipulate to give them a sense of control and security.
 - b. Aaron (God's chosen priest) is complicit in this sin
 - c. This is so tragic! At the same time God is on the mountain with Moses forming this great covenant, his people are already "cheating on him" at the base of the mountain
 3. God's anger burns against the people (v. 7-9)

- a. Description of the people: corrupt, quick to turn away, stiff-necked
- b. God's threat to destroy them
 - 1) God knows he is not going to destroy them, but he is speaking this way to invite Moses to engage him and learn more about his character
- 4. Moses intercedes for the people (v. 11-14)
 - a. He appeals to the fact that these are God's people
 - b. He appeals to God's reputation/glory among the other nations
 - c. He reminds God of his covenant with Abraham
- 5. Moses' anger burns against the people (v. 19-20)
 - a. He breaks the tablets as a symbol to demonstrate that the Israelites have broken the covenant
 - b. He thoroughly destroys the idol and makes sure it is never made again
- 6. The people are disciplined (The Levites kill 3000 people and God sends a plague)
- C. Preparing to Leave Sinai (ch. 33-34)
 - 1. In light of the people's sin, God states that he will send an angel to guide them, rather than guide them himself, lest he destroy them (v. 1-3)
 - 2. The people mourn the loss of God's immediate presence (v. 4-6)
 - 3. Moses intercedes again (v. 12-14)
 - 4. God hears Moses' plea and agrees to once again personally accompany Israel (v. 14-17)
 - 5. Moses asks to see God's glory for reassurance (v. 18)
 - 6. God reveals his glory and character to Moses
 - a. He is free to be merciful to whomever he chooses (v. 19-20)
 - b. God reveals his merciful, gracious, patient character (34:5-7)
- D. God restores the covenant
 - 1. New tablets (34:1)
 - 2. God's promise of covenant (34:10-11)
- E. God is the God of second chances, the God of fresh starts, the God of the "do-over"

Conclusion

- I. We can relate to Israel
 - A. We are quick to be afraid, continuing in the same old sins, worshipping false Gods
 - B. But God is slow to anger, he forgives us
 - Not because of who we are, but because of who he is
 - Because of the cross
- II. Let's celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness
 - A. Quit trying to fix your sin problem
 - B. Extend patience and forgiveness to others
 - C. Do something extravagant for God as an act of gratitude
 - The woman in the alabaster jar in Luke 7:36-50: "Her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Discussion Questions

1. Remembering the story of Israel in Exodus (their lack of faith, their grumbling, their turning to a golden calf, etc.) where do you most see yourself in them?
2. As you consider the story of God's relationship with Israel in Exodus 3-34, what in particular struck you most about God in his interactions with his people? Was there a particular scene or comment or response that has stayed with you?
3. Read God's description of himself in Exodus 34:6-7. How do you explain the tension between his description of his mercy, patience, and forgiveness in v. 6-7 and his description of his punishing sins at the end of v. 7?
4. As you consider ways to celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness in your own life, how are you being led to respond? (As a reminder, some possible responses include letting go of our attempt to fix our own sin problem, extending more patience and forgiveness to those around us, and responding with extravagant gratitude to God like the sinful woman in Luke 7.) Try to be specific.