

GOD'S JEALOUS LOVE

CORE PASSAGE: EXODUS 34:1-14

CONTEXT

With many miracles, Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. At Mount Sinai, they received God's laws. As Moses returned to the mountaintop to receive additional instructions, the people created a golden calf to worship, violating the first and second commandments. Moses shattered the tablets to show that the people had broken their covenant with God. Moses then returned to Mount Sinai and pleaded with God for mercy. In response, God showed mercy by equipping Moses to lead and renewing His covenant with the people.

KEY CONCEPT

**God is compassionate and gracious,
and He is also a jealous God.**

As you examine Exodus 34:1-14:

- Identify God's characteristics, such as the Lord is compassionate and gracious, yet just.
- Reflect upon the fact that we are to destroy idols in our lives, keeping God first in everything.



TIMELINE

God Gives Israel the Law Through Moses at Mount Sinai and Establishes His Covenant with Them (Exodus 20–31)

SESSION STUDY: God Renews His Covenant with Israel (Exodus 34)

The Israelites Worship a Golden Calf as Their God, Breaking the Covenant (Exodus 32)

The Israelites Faithfully Contribute to and Construct the Lord's Tabernacle (Exodus 35–40)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Exodus 32:1-14
- Day 2:** Exodus 32:15-35
- Day 3:** Exodus 33:1-11
- Day 4:** Exodus 33:12–34:8
- Day 5:** Exodus 34:9-35
- Day 6:** Psalm 145



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

EXODUS 34:1-8

WHEN WE RETURN TO GOD AFTER SINNING, HE IS GRACIOUS TO FORGIVE.

Highlight God's self-description of His mercy, and underline His self-description of His justice.

1 The LORD said to Moses, "Cut two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. **2** Be prepared by morning. Come up Mount Sinai in the morning and stand before me on the mountaintop. **3** No one may go up with you; in fact, no one should be seen anywhere on the mountain. Even the flocks and herds are not to graze in front of that mountain." **4** Moses cut two stone tablets like the first ones. He got up early in the morning, and taking the two stone tablets in his hand, he climbed Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him. **5** The LORD came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed his name, "the LORD." **6** The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed: The LORD—the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, **7** maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation. **8** Moses immediately knelt low on the ground and worshiped.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The Lord Jesus is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and truth. He will judge sin, yet He is faithful to forgive and save all who come to Him in repentance and faith.

Key Concept: God is compassionate and gracious, and He is also a jealous God.



This passage describes the great encounter that took place between God and Moses on Mount Sinai that ultimately resulted in the renewing of God's covenant with the Israelites. The Israelites had quickly and blatantly violated God's commandments with a golden calf (Exodus 32), a breach illustrated when Moses smashed the tablets of the law. But God told Moses to cut two new stones, and He came down to meet with Moses to write the laws again. There God revealed the glory of who He is—He is just and patient, loving, forgiving, faithful, and He will not abandon His people.

This seeming paradox—or self-contradictory statement—between mercy and justice demonstrates how God can forgive those who have committed sins without compromising His own righteousness. When people turn away from their sins and turn to God for forgiveness, God greets them with open arms, demonstrating His love and faithfulness. On the other hand, God will judge and hold accountable those who do not show any signs of repentance for their sins.

How should acknowledging God's mercy help us change our outlook when we sin?

After God's self-revelation of His glorious character—"all [His] goodness" (Exodus 33:19)—Moses bowed down in worship, a response we should all have. Moses himself was not guilty for the sin with the golden calf; he had interceded for the lives of his sinful people and stood strong for the holiness of God against his sinful people (32:7-35). Yet hearing that the Lord is both merciful and just resulted in praise.

By virtue of the fact that this self-revelation of God was recorded, it was meant for more than just Moses. The Israelites received this word, as have we many centuries later, and we all find ourselves in this divine mystery. We have sinned, we are "guilty," and we deserve punishment, but God forgives "iniquity, rebellion, and sin." Repentance and faith are key for the differing outcomes, but atonement must still be made (32:30). God forgives, showing mercy, but He must also fulfill His justice. God has satisfied both aspects of His divine nature in Jesus, the perfect Mediator between God and man (Romans 3:26; 1 Timothy 2:5).

How can believing that God forgives iniquity, rebellion, and sin encourage us to engage in genuine worship?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

EXODUS 34:9-14

THE LORD KEEPS HIS PROMISES AND DESERVES OUR EXCLUSIVE LOYALTY.

Highlight God's promises, and underline what the Lord required of the Israelites.

9 Then he said, “My Lord, if I have indeed found favor with you, my Lord, please go with us (even though this is a stiff-necked people), forgive our iniquity and our sin, and accept us as your own possession.” **10** And the LORD responded, “Look, I am making a covenant. In the presence of all your people I will perform wonders that have never been done in the whole earth or in any nation. All the people you live among will see the LORD’s work, for what I am doing with you is awe-inspiring. **11** Observe what I command you today. I am going to drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hethites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **12** Be careful not to make a treaty with the inhabitants of the land that you are going to enter; otherwise, they will become a snare among you. **13** Instead, you must tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, and chop down their Asherah poles. **14** Because the LORD is jealous for his reputation, you are never to bow down to another god. He is a jealous God.

Key Concept: God is compassionate and gracious, and He is also a jealous God.

Moses asked God to remain with the Israelites, appealing for His favor and presence. To this end, God emphasized His faithfulness to His promises, restated His covenant with His people, and reminded them that He deserved their undivided devotion. In His grace, God promised them a home and described the extraordinary things He would do for them to obtain it.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS GRACIOUS: God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Ephesians 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Romans 6:23). However, instead of leaving people in their sins, God has demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God's promises are sure because He is faithful to His word, yet He still has expectations of His people. In the promised land that He would give the Israelites, they were to refrain from forming alliances with the pagan nations inhabiting the promised land, emphasizing the danger of being ensnared by ungodly, worldly influences and insisting on complete allegiance to Him alone. God's jealousy over His people's faithfulness was clear as He ordered the demolition of idols and altars dedicated to other gods.

The jealous desire of God for His people remains consistent for us in the new covenant, highlighting the importance of prioritizing God above all else and remaining faithful to His commands. Worldly entanglements can lead to spiritual compromise and distance from God. Therefore, we must be vigilant to identify and eliminate any idols or distractions hindering our devotion to God. God's jealous love for His people requires us to give Him His rightful place as the sole object of our worship and allegiance.

What are modern idols or distractions in your life that compete with the Lord's desire for your exclusive allegiance and worship?

How should the assurance of the Lord's faithfulness to keep His promises reshape your priorities and commitments in life?

GROUP EXPERIENCE



WHO IS THE LORD?

Record definitions and explanations of God's self-revealed character in Exodus 34:1-14, and locate examples of God's character in Scripture.

COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS (EXODUS 34:)

SLOW TO ANGER (EXODUS 34:)

ABOUNDING IN FAITHFUL LOVE (EXODUS 34:)

ABOUNDING IN TRUTH (EXODUS 34:)

FORGIVING (EXODUS 34:)

WILL NOT LEAVE THE GUILTY UNPUNISHED (EXODUS 34:)

JEALOUS (EXODUS 34:)

Which characteristic of God in Exodus 34:1-14 stood out to you this week or today? Why?



Key Concept: God is compassionate and gracious, and He is also a jealous God.



HEAD

How does considering God's jealous love and His perfect character prompt you to assess your spiritual priorities and allegiances?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 145. Reflect on each characteristic of God and consider how God has demonstrated each characteristic in your life. Then pray through Psalm 145:17-21, expressing your thanksgiving and commitment to the Lord in response to who He is and what He has done for you.



HEART

How should recognizing God's jealous love for you help you endure difficulties and doubts in life?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

With whom will you share about the character and works of God, especially in Jesus, that they may believe in Him and be saved?

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

By Matt Rogers

God reveals Himself to His people. This reality may seem like common sense, but there's nothing that requires God to make Himself known to His creation. He certainly could have hidden from those He made. But from the very dawn of creation, we see God walking with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). He was among them. He wanted to be known by them.

After sin entered the world, God could have isolated Himself from the rebels He'd created. People are often like this. If you've ever been hurt by a friend, you've likely been tempted simply to write off that person. At best, you probably wouldn't allow them to get close again since they wronged you in the past. If God were like us, the sin of all humans could have led God to do the same.

But God chose to make Himself known so that people could worship Him. He wanted humans to know Him—understand who He is—so they could rightly orient their lives to His character. This self-revelation was vital after humankind's sin in the garden. Had a holy God not wanted to be known, people would have no way of having a relationship with Him restored and their sins forgiven.

GOD'S CHARACTER

Moses was not the first person to meet God, but He was given a unique view of God's glory. God didn't reveal physical attributes to Moses; instead, He showed Moses His character. He wanted Moses to know what He is like, so He displayed His glory. In Exodus 34 we read: "The LORD—the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished" (Exodus 34:6-7). Here we have God's glory summarized with character traits—God is compassionate, gracious, patient, faithful, loving, forgiving, and just. This is the God who wants to be known and worshiped.

This gracious self-disclosure was one example among many of God making Himself known to Israel, though they continued to persist in their waywardness. Even though God continued to reveal Himself, the people rejected Him in favor of the rival, pagan, pseudo-gods of the day. Though the true God was among them, they worshiped idols and turned away from the God of love.

GOD'S SON

And still, God did not give up. So He sent the pinnacle of His self-revelation: “When the time came to completion, God sent his Son” (Galatians 4:4). Jesus Christ is fully God—the exact expression of His nature (Hebrews 1:1-4). So when Jesus was born, God was making Himself known. John’s prologue summarized God’s revelation through Christ: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The glory that Moses briefly witnessed was on full display through Jesus’s life. To see Jesus is to see the glory of God. Jesus embodies the characteristics that God allowed Moses to witness many centuries before. Everywhere Jesus went and everything Jesus did was an example of the love, faithfulness, forgiveness, justice, compassion, grace, and patience of God.

God didn’t reveal physical attributes to Moses; instead, He showed Moses His character.

GOD'S SPIRIT

Though Jesus’s life on earth was brief—a mere three decades long—His departure from this world did not leave His followers without God’s presence. Anticipating His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus told the disciples: “Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7). The Counselor, also known as the Holy Spirit, is the long-standing deposit of the presence of God among the people of God until Jesus returns (Ephesians 1:13-14). He empowers Christians to embody the holiness that God Himself manifests (Galatians 5:22-23).

THE TRINITY

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit all reveal who God is and why He is worthy of worship. While the Bible does not use the term “Trinity” to refer to God, the Scriptures clearly testify to the reality that God is one God revealed in three Persons. Each Person of the Godhead is unique yet fully divine. The Trinitarian God reveals Himself to humans so they can rightly know who God is and orient their lives as a worshipful response to His holiness (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:10).

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