

# Lenten Devotional

## 2020

Saturday, April 4, 2020  
Day 34, Exodus 34

### **Greater Mercy**

*“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. 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 34:6–7)*

I once had a student, while we were studying Genesis, ask me when the God of Wrath was going to show up. My presentation was not living up to the popular expectations of the day apparently. But, it is certainly true. The “God of the Old Testament” has a bad reputation. So, often Christians, wrongly, work on a false assumption: the God of the Old Testament is bad, but the God of the New Testament is good. This is problematic, however, because there is only one God.

Christians can only be this ignorant because we have not read the Hebrew Scriptures carefully enough or often enough. Here is a critical moment in Israel’s history. Will YHWH renew the broken covenant? Notice the tablets once again represent the relationship. So, when God calls Moses to make new tablets, this is good news. But, notice also that Moses was going to go up to see if he could make atonement for Israel. Has he? No. Yet, Israel is forgiven anyways.

God is continuing to reveal his character to his people. He is compassionate and gracious. Read those words that God speaks about himself. His love is to thousands, but his punishment is limited. In short, God’s mercy far exceeds his justice. This is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus does not appease a wrathful father. No! Jesus fulfills the Father’s plan of rescue and renewal. That’s why despite all Israel’s failure—and our!—God never stops reaching out to us.

This is so important because the way we think about God (theology) will impact how we perceive ourselves. There are people who believe at a heart level that they have sinned so grossly that they cannot approach God. Somewhere in their hearts, they think he cannot accept them. There is absolutely no sin that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Yes, our sin will have consequence. Yes, it will need to be dealt with. But, that is precisely what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. That is the God of the Old Testament and the New. Thanks be to God!

### **Prayer**

O Merciful and Gracious One, thank you that your mercy is greater than your justice. Thank you that your mercy is greater than all of our sins. Help us to see you rightly and have that reflected to others in our faces. Amen.