

Recently we have been meditating on the *monumental reference to the sin of unbelief* we find in Jude verse 5: all through their wilderness wanderings, God's people dared to question if the Lord was among them or not. All through those wanderings, they rejected the assurance of God's unchanging character contained in His name, "LORD." But the Lord Jesus must destroy such unbelief, though He patiently bore with it all through Israel's wilderness wanderings. Thus, Christ Jesus Himself is identified as "the LORD" who both rescued Israel out of Egypt and destroyed those who would not believe: "Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" v.5. What does it mean to affirm Jesus as "LORD," avoiding the sin of Israel and also the sin of the false teachers of Jude's day, who "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude v. 4)? This week, we return to the mercy, love, and peace which the Lord Jesus continuously and unchangeable applies to His wayward people, thereby discovering the richness of Christ's Lordship.

Mon/Tues: Read Exodus 33:19 and Matthew 22:23-33**The God of the Living**

When Moses asks to see the glory of the LORD, it is the twin attributes of mercy and compassion which are emphasized: "I will cause all my goodness to pass before your face, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, before your face. I will have **mercy** on whom I will have **mercy**, and I will have **compassion** on whom I will have **compassion**" (Exodus 33:19).

What does such an unchanging character mean for us? Since God IS, He never changes in His covenant relationship to His people. The God who told Abraham, "I AM your God," continues to be Abraham's God and actually gives Abraham resurrection life so that it can be eternally said, "I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. - still!" This is Jesus' point in Matthew 22:32. He quotes the LORD's description of His relationship to the long-since dead Abraham: "I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.... He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Because God doesn't change, we as His people are kept in continual relationship with the LORD even after we die!

Meditate and Pray: Thank you, LORD, that you identify yourself in relation to your covenant people in whatever trials they face – even death itself. As Jesus says about the unchangeable nature of His Father: He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive. Give us courage through this name to dwell securely and without fear as "aliens" in this hostile world. May we be persuaded that the very same God who preserved the faith of our fathers and mothers will also carry us through life, and even through death, as our "I AM" God! Amen.

Wednesday: Read Exodus 3:14-15 and 17:1-2**Calling on I AM**

Exodus 17 opens with Israel literally “contending,” or formally objecting to God through Moses. Moses objects, “Why do you bring a case against me and test the LORD?” With great hostility and a desire to punish God, Israel puts the “LORD” in the dock, blaming Him for all their ills. This is all the more remarkable when we remember what this name “LORD” stands for. Rooted in the present continuous tense of the Hebrew verb “to be,” it is a name which commands us to rest on God’s unchanging faithfulness. He will not deceive us by giving us a false name on which to call; He will perform for us all that His name has promised! He has staked His reputation on being unchangeably true and trustworthy, especially when it comes to saving and preserving the lives of His own. This is why the name “LORD” could be translated as: “I will be who I will be.” He is always the same, unchangeable Savior of His people.

Meditate and Pray: Thank you, LORD, that you never alter the relationship with us which your name implies. You refuse to abandon us to death, and instead raise us from the dead, so that you can keep your name as I AM, and so you can say of us, “I AM your God...”. Thank you that you care about every word of Scripture, and even every verb tense! Thank you that your name as Savior in our lives is unchangeably eternal. Do not let us question your name or place in our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who is the same “yesterday, today and forever.” Amen.

Thursday: Read Exodus 17:1-7 and 33:13-19**Who is a Pardoning God like Thee?**

Though Israel scorns God’s name and refuses to trust the unchanging Divine character which it represents, Moses treasures this name “LORD,” and wants to learn more. We see Moses ask for an expanded view of this name, asking God to “show him His glory.” God seems pleased with Moses’ request, and reveals it to him as full of compassion and mercy. In this way His Name “LORD” will be proclaimed in Moses’ very presence.

Notice especially how intimate the LORD is with Moses in verse 19, literally translated: “I will cause all my goodness to pass **before your face**, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, **before your face**. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Nothing could be more direct: Moses’ “**face**” is going to directly encounter God, a revelation of Himself in a life-giving and personal way: *Not* (verse 20), with a deadly view of the white hot holiness of God, but with a view full of God’s compassion and mercy.

Meditate and Pray: Give the LORD the joyful thanks of your heart as you see Him magnify His goodness directly revealed to sinners such as Moses and we ourselves, using hymn # 82:

*Great God of wonders! All Thy ways
Are matchless, Godlike and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine,
More Godlike and unrivaled shine.*

*Crimes of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty, daring worms to spare;
This is Thy grand prerogative,
And none shall in the honor share,
And none shall in the honor share.*

*Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
Or who has grace so rich and free?*

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Exodus 33:19-20 and 34:5-8

As Long as My Name

When Moses asks to see the glory of the LORD, the twin attributes of mercy and compassion are emphasized: “I will cause all my goodness to pass before your face, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, before your face. I will have **mercy** on whom I will have **mercy**, and I will have **compassion** on whom I will have **compassion**” (Exodus 33:19).

Each of these words describe the deep and loving character of God. The first word “mercy” in verse 19, is the undeserved favor of a superior to a lowly, afflicted, humbled soul. Moses, as the “meekest man on the face of the earth at that time” (Numbers 12:3), has in our passage already pleaded for this “favor” to continue with him and with wicked Israel: “If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find **favor** with you. Remember that this nation is your people” (Exodus 33:13). What astounding faith from the Spirit of God to prompt Moses to pray for this “favor” to be shown to Israel after the golden calf!

“Compassion,” the second word for God’s goodness in verse 19, comes from the idea of tenderness, or softness, and is used of the tender affection of a mother or father for their child, and also is the word for a mother’s womb. This is how God the Father shows that He is continually mindful of the plight of His own. With His compassionate eye upon us, even when we sin, He is ready at any moment to mercifully cover over our sins as His promise of compassion moves us to confess. Proverbs 28:13 says, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that His love for us endures as long and unchangeably as His name. He is the I AM and his mercy always will be! There is a limitless depth of Divine compassion coming from the springs of the LORD's tenderest heart affections! Sing about such deep compassion from Psalm 103:13, found in *Trinity Hymnal* # 131:

*Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in Heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.*

*God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish;
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.*

*Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.*

*Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.*