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**The Father's Heart** by Ben S

**Exodus 34:6-7**

After years of studying the scriptures John Owen the great 17th Century Bible scholar says that the Christian life in this world and the next is all about gazing on the glory and beauty of Jesus. On the day of his death he said, *"The long wished-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing, in this world. ...I am going to him whom my soul has loved, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love, which is the whole ground of my consolation (and comfort)."*

Today, I want us to turn to Exodus 33-34 to consider the glorious heart of God. Moses prays, "God, show me who you are and open up your glorious heart to me. What a bold prayer! This is the Lord's response in v.19 *"And the Lord said, 'I will cause all my GOODNESS to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence."* We get to see God's glory through hearing God's Word. (v. 6-7) *"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."* Moses discovered God's glorious heart is: "compassionate and gracious"

**Compassionate and Gracious:** These are the very first words God used to describe his heart to Moses: compassionate and gracious. God's kindness flows naturally out of his heart and pours down on the undeserving and needy who call out to him in faith. In 2 Cor 1:3 Paul describes God as *"the Father of compassion (or mercies) and the God of all comfort."* This is who God our father is. He is an endless fountain of compassion, mercy, grace and comfort. And we are all invited to come to him to drink as often as we need whatever our sin and whatever our struggle.

**Slow to anger:** God reveals to us in his Word that he is slow to anger and quick to love. His mercy is pent up and ready to gush forth at the slightest inclination of any sinner who reaches out to him in need. It is his anger which is slow and takes much provoking. We speak of someone having a short fuse. God has a very long fuse. God is slow to anger but a good God cannot remain indifferent to sin. A God of love's response to evil must always be righteous anger. And if you believe a good God exists and there is such a thing as evil and darkness in the world and in human beings, so, it makes perfect sense to believe that one day there must be a day of judgement where God will put all wrongs right. Peter writes: *"God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but wanting everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief."* (2Peter 3:9) Have you come to this patient God for mercy and grace?

**Abounding in love and faithfulness:** In Hebrew this is covenant language, the language of marriage when a people bind themselves to others in love and faithfulness forsaking all others! This is the kind of heart God has towards his people. And he abounds in it! He is the perfect spouse who will never let us down.

**He judges sin but delights to show mercy:** In v.7 the Lord uses the same phrase he uses back in Exodus 20:5-6 which is translated like this: *"punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but*

*showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*" We have to wrestle with this: Is this God of compassion, grace, patience, love and faithfulness now saying: if you sin I will take it out on your innocent children?' It's important to remember the context of these verses. God is giving his law to his covenant people. He gives them a clear warning here that he is a completely just God and cannot overlook sin. The Lord is warning his people: If you worship other gods, if you always work and never keep the Sabbath for rest and worship, if you do not honour your parents, if you murder and hate people, if you commit adultery and lust, if you steal, tell lies and covet your neighbours that will not just affect you but also your children and your children's children. God does not just wink at sin. He says in his word if we choose to reject him and walk in our own selfish ways with an unrepentant heart he will leave us to the consequences of our sinful choices, both in this life and the next.

**But** God has sent his Son Jesus, the light of the world, into the darkness. "Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being: fully and perfectly compassionate, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness, just and merciful." (Hebrews 1:3) He is the Lord of Glory. On the third day the Lord of Glory burst out of the tomb to chase away the darkness of sin and death forever! He ascended in glory to the right hand of God to rule and one day he will return in glory with all his angels and the saints who have gone before us.

We must ask ourselves if Christianity is true and on that final day will I be blasted away forever from the Jesus I never wanted or will I be transformed into his image to enjoy and reflect his glory eternally? On the last day we will behold the glory of Jesus by sight. But right now are you beholding the glory of God by faith? You were made for this. It is your destiny. And by faith you must behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus throughout your life in this world.

**How do we do it?:** Christ's glory shines as we read the scriptures. He shines in the fellowship of believers, the singing of the hymns, the glories of creation, the blessings of the gospel, and the many gifts God has given to the world. In the light of Christ's face sin's hard frost disappears. The more we meditate on the compassion, grace, patience, love, faithfulness of Jesus, the more the light of his glory will loosen sin's grip on our hearts. It's a long process friends which will be complete on that final day when our faith becomes sight.

"One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." (Psalm 27:4)

"And now may the lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen." (Numbers 6:24-26)