

Changed into His likeness - Compassion

Welcome

In the last bible study I began to look at the proclamation by God to Moses of His name on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34. I said that the Lord continued to reveal His name to the people of Israel throughout the Old Testament period, with the full revelation of His name, His character, His essential nature in Jesus Christ. (Hebrew 1v1-3) So for me studying and meditating on Exodus 34v6-8 is a focus on Jesus.

God's purpose was and is to restore man (male & female) to the original image - remember that in Genesis 1v26 He said that He made man "in our image, according to our likeness". Colossians 1 says that "Jesus is the image of the invisible God". John 1 says "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God", referring to Jesus.

Moses in Exodus 33v18 asked God to show him His glory. Jesus in John 17v 22-24 asked God to show the disciples His glory and also to give it to them. (RT Kendall says of John 17 that it is a presentation of how Jesus prays for us now).

I also noted that Moses didn't say what he saw, he only wrote about what he heard on the mountain.

Exodus 34v4-9

2 Corinthians 3v15-18

2 Corinthians 4v6

The first of the five facets of God's Name, character, nature that was proclaimed to Moses, revealed in Jesus and available to us through faith, is compassion.

Noah Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language

1. (*n.*) Literally, suffering with another; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another; pity; commiseration

In the bible, Compassion is the translation in the old testament of a number of different Hebrew words:-

racham, "to love," "pity," "be merciful" ([Deuteronomy 13:17](#); [Deuteronomy 30:3](#));

rachamim, "mercies" ([1 Kings 8:50](#));

chamal, "to pity," "spare" ([Exodus 2:6](#) [1 Samuel 23:21](#));

rachum ([Psalm 78:38](#); [Psalm 86:15](#); [Psalm 111:4](#); [112:04:00](#); [145:8](#)), is rendered by the American Standard Revised Version "merciful."

There are also a number of Greek words in the New Testament:-

splagchnizomai, "to have the bowels yearning," [Matthew 9:36](#); [Matthew 14:14](#), etc.;

sumpatheo ([Hebrews 10:34](#)), "to suffer with (another)";

sumpathes ([1 Peter 3:8](#), the Revised Version (British and American) "compassionate," margin, Greek, "sympathetic");

metriopatheo ([Hebrews 5:2](#), the Revised Version (British and American) "who can bear gently with");

eleeo, "to show mildness," "kindness" ([Matthew 18:33](#) [Mark 5:19](#) [Jude 1:22](#), the Revised Version (British and American) "mercy");

oikteiro, "to have pity" or "mercy" ([Romans 9:15](#) bis).

Racham - Deuteronomy 4v31, Isaiah 30 v 18 - Pitiful, merciful

Rachamim - Nehemiah 9 v 19, 9 v 27-28 - Tender mercies

Splagchnizomai - Matthew 9 v 36 - To have the bowels yearning

Sumpatheo - Hebrews 10 v 34 - To suffer with

Both racham and splagchnizomai are examples of the physical origin of spiritual terms, the bowels being regarded as the seat of the

warm, tender emotions or feelings. But, while racham applied to the lower viscera as well as the higher, splanchnon denoted chiefly the higher viscera, the heart, lungs, liver.

The Lord's original revelation of His covenant name, Yahweh, to Moses was in the context of Israel's suffering. Exodus 3 v 6-15.

The time between that meeting and this one was full of God in action. It was God working out from His covenant relationship with Abraham. So as God was proclaiming His name Moses had already seen a demonstration of all that God is. With such dramatic displays of His compassion, grace, longsuffering, loving-kindness & truth, Israel should never have doubted His commitment to them.

That The Lord wanted people to be like Him can be seen throughout the Old Testament, especially in the law of Moses. Also in the prophets we read how He expects the outworking of compassion to work. Isaiah 58v6-7, Isaiah 61v1-3.

The ultimate act of compassion by The Lord God is the Cross - The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

The ultimate expression of compassion is in the person of Jesus both in what He did and said. Remember, He said that He only did what He saw His Father doing and spoke the words that His Father gave Him. The coming of Jesus was entirely in God's plan:- Luke 1v78-79.

So just a sample of Jesus teaching:-

Matthew 5 v7

Matthew 25v34-36

And a sample of what He did:-

John 8v7-11. Jesus was the only one who had the right to throw the first stone. He also knew that He would soon be taking the penalty for her sins and for the accusers' sins when He went to the cross. He reached out to them all in compassion to free them from the bondage and the penalty of sin.

John 11v 33-35. Jesus allowed His emotions to be touched by their suffering and then to bring life to a situation of death.

Then the apostle Paul also placed compassion at the top of his list of attributes for Christians in Ephesians & Colossians. Colossians 3v12-14. To achieve that Paul gives these instructions in Colossians 3v1-4 etc. and Philippians 2v5-8.

So becoming like Jesus is what it's all about. Not building a church. Not getting our doctrines right. Not having the best form of worship. Important though all these might be, it's being changed from one degree of glory to another into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

The God of the New Testament, the Father of men, is most clearly revealed as "a God full of compassion." It extends to the whole human race, for which He effected not merely a temporal, but a spiritual and eternal, deliverance, giving up His own Son to the death of the cross in order to save us from the worst bondage of sin, with its consequences; seeking thereby to gain a new, wider people for Himself, still more devoted, more filled with and expressive of His own Spirit. Therefore all who know the God and Father of Christ, and who call themselves His children, must necessarily cultivate compassion and show mercy, "even as he is merciful." Hence, the many apostolic injunctions to that effect Christianity may be said to be distinctively the religion of Compassion. (Encyclopaedia)

I want to finish tonight with a prayer that is in Heidi Baker's book "Compelled by Love" it was one of Mother Teresa's favourite prayers & written by John Henry Newman, and read every day by the Missionaries of Charity.

Dear Lord

Help me to spread your fragrance wherever I go.

Flood my soul with your spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through me, and be so in me that every should I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul.

Let them look up and see no longer me, but only you o Lord.

Stay with me, then I will begin to shine as you do; so to shine as to be a light to others.

The light o Lord will be all from you; none of it will be mine; it will be You shining on others through me.

Let me thus praise you in the way you love best; by shining on those around me.

Let me preach you without preaching, not by words but by my example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to you.

Amen