

## God is Slow to Anger

Our God is... (Part 4)

Exodus 34:5-7

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Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | [Slides](#) | 9.16.20

### Exodus 34:5-7

Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "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."<sup>1</sup>

### Slow to Anger

- For my understanding of God being slow to anger and my preparation of this message, I owe a lot to John Mark Comer and his book *God Has a Name*.
- In the Hebrew word for "slow to anger" is **erek apayim**, which literally means "long of nostrils."<sup>2</sup>
  - When you lose your temper, you stick out your chest, your face turns red, and your nostrils flare out. *Erek apayim* suggests that when you're upset, you have self-control and don't lose your cool.
- *erek apayim* in Proverbs
  - *Proverbs 14:29* - Whoever is patient [*erek apayim*] has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.
  - *Proverbs 16:32* - Better a patient [*erek apayim*] person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.
- "If you're slow to anger, it's not that you don't have feelings of frustration; it's that you don't lose it and explode when you get worked up emotionally; you have control over your feelings of frustration and anger and even rage."<sup>3</sup>
- John Mark Comer - "You can make God mad, but you really have to work at it."<sup>4</sup>
- God is SLOW to anger.
  - Unlike other "gods," our God doesn't have a temper.<sup>5</sup>
  - Some translations translate *erek apayim* as "patient" or "longsuffering."<sup>6</sup>
  - God is very patient. He is patient towards you individually and towards humanity collectively.
  - God gets angry, but it takes a while. And he never loses His temper.

<sup>1</sup> All biblical references in this document are taken from the New International Version (NIV). *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> John Mark Comer, *God Has a Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 156.

<sup>3</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 157.

<sup>4</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 157.

<sup>5</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 158.

<sup>6</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 158.

- When He gets angry, "it's fitting. It's the right emotional response."<sup>7</sup> When God gets angry, He is right. He is right to be angry.
- God is slow to ANGER.
  - Even though God is slow to anger, He does get angry.
  - God's anger in Scripture
    - *Psalm 7:11-12* - God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day. If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow.
      - How often does God get angry? Every day!
    - *Habakkuk 3:2* - Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.
    - *Psalm 5:5-6* - The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong; you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, Lord, detest.
    - *Psalm 11:5* - The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.
  - "Scripture speaks of God's anger more than 600 times."<sup>8</sup>
  - Isn't God a God of love? Yes! Then why is He angry? Who is He angry with? The violent and wicked.
    - God is angry with terrorists, rapists, pedophiles, corrupt politicians, scam artists, and murderers. It is right to be mad with those who do evil.
    - God not being angry with hurting and injustice would be a major problem.
    - If God did not get angry, he would not be loving!
  - So when God actually does get angry, it's not an accident. It's not because he lost His cool or had a temper tantrum.
  - When God gets angry, He is angry on purpose. He is deliberate and in control.<sup>9</sup>
  - Things are not as they're meant to be.
    - "There are times when the healthy, emotionally mature response to evil is anger."<sup>10</sup>
    - Remember, God's anger is from a parent-like love for his children.<sup>11</sup> (God's compassion)
      - Parents often get angry with their children out of love.
  - We want a God of wrath, a God who gets angry when suffering is present. If He did not, He would be indifferent to pain.
- Definition of God's wrath: "his steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations."<sup>12</sup>
  - God's anger is often different from our anger.

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<sup>7</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 159

<sup>8</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 159.

<sup>10</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 161.

<sup>11</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 162.

<sup>12</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 162.

## Nineveh: A Case Study on God being Slow to Anger

- An excellent example or case study of God being slow to anger is His relationship with the city of Nineveh.<sup>13</sup>
- Nineveh is the capital city of Assyria. It's an evil, barbaric city.
  - God sends Jonah to call the city to repentance. They repent and God shows them His grace.
  - 150 years later, Nahum, another prophet of God, describes the doom that is to come to Nineveh due to their enslaving 10 of the 12 Jewish tribes.
- Two times in the Bible *Exodus 34:6-7* is quoted in reference to Nineveh. One time emphasizes God's grace. One time emphasizes God's anger.
  - *Jonah 4:1-3* - **1** But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. **2** He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. **3** Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."
  - *Nahum 1:1-3* - **1** A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. **2** The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies. **3** The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.
- God is patient, gracious, and compassionate. But there comes a time when God says, "Enough is enough. No more evil."

## God's Anger and Wrath

- There's been an interesting shift in people's views of God's wrath. Today, people do not want a God of wrath. But the main problem people in the Old Testament had was God's lack of wrath. "How long o Lord" is a common phrase in the psalms.
- Love demands anger.
- God is not wrath. God is not anger. God is love. Yes, God does get angry and executes His wrath, but He is love. And His love is connected to His wrath and anger. He gets angry because He loves.
- What does God's anger or God's wrath look like?<sup>14</sup>
  - Present
    - When God's wrath is realized immediately
    - Uzzah and the cart carrying the Ark of the Covenant (*2 Samuel 6:6-7*)
    - Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts 5:1-11*)
  - Future
    - Day of the Lord/Judgement Day (*Acts 17:31*)

<sup>13</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 163-165.

<sup>14</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 166.

- Active
  - "When God acts *directly* to stop evil."<sup>15</sup>
  - Uzzah, Ananias and Sapphira
  - "There are barely any stories like this in the Bible. Active wrath is the exception to the rule. Most of the time it's passive wrath."<sup>16</sup>
- Passive
  - "Passive wrath is when God does not act, and that is the judgement. And this is usually how Yahweh usually deals with evil."<sup>17</sup>
  - God at times will step back and remove His protection.
  - As an act of judgement, God will often let people do what they want to do and reap the consequences of their decisions.
    - *Romans 1:24* - Therefore **God gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.
    - *Romans 1:26-27* - **God gave them over** to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.
    - *Romans 1:28* - Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.
  - Sometimes the harshest judgement of God is letting someone reap what they sow. This is God allowing someone to stay on the path they wish to travel. This is someone receiving the consequences they deserve.

### How does Jesus exemplify being slow to anger?

- We have and will point this out every week of this study on the characteristics of God: Jesus is the clearest picture of God we've got. "[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God...in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (*Colossians 1:15, 19*). God is like Jesus. Jesus is like God. Jesus is God. Jesus is God's Son. If you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus. This means that if God is slow to anger, Jesus perfectly exemplifies being slow to anger.
- Jesus is the most slow to anger person ever.
- What are some examples from the gospels when Jesus was patient, but slow to anger?
- Jesus is slow to anger, but He gets angry. He cleanses the Temple.

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<sup>15</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 168.

<sup>16</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 169.

<sup>17</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 169.

- *John 2:13-17* - **13** When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. **15** So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. **16** To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" **17** His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."
- Jews would travel hundreds and even thousands of miles to visit the Temple. Instead of bringing their own lamb or goat to sacrifice, some people would buy their animals in the Temple. Since they didn't have much of a choice, vendors would increase the price of the animals, and money-changers would charge an extremely high exchange rate for currency.<sup>18</sup>
- Jesus had entered the Temple many times. He saw corruption many times. But He finally had enough.
- Jesus was patient. But He finally had enough of the injustice.

### **Our response to our God who is slow to anger**

- Remember, God is SLOW to anger.<sup>19</sup>
  - Maybe knowing God is SLOW to anger changes how you view God.
  - God does not have a temper. He is patient toward you.
- God is slow to ANGER.<sup>20</sup>
  - Maybe knowing God is slow to ANGER changes how you view God.
  - Just because God is patient, it does not mean God won't judge evil.
  - God is not indifferent to evil, oppression, and suffering.
  - One day there will be a day of judgement.
- We have and will point this out each week in this study on the characteristics of God also: God created humanity, all people, in His image (*Genesis 1:27*). This means we were created to be like Him, and are to live into God's intent for our lives. God is slow to anger. This means we're to strive to be slow to anger like Him.
- God is slow to anger/patient so we should be slow to anger/patient.
  - "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (*James 1:19*)
  - Are you a patient person? Are you high-strung? Do you lose your cool easily? Would the person you're in a relationship say you have a temper?

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<sup>18</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 177.

<sup>19</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 180.

<sup>20</sup> Comer, *God Has a Name*, 181.