

Exodus 20:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Analysis

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The contrast is staggering: judgment to third/fourth generation, but mercy 'unto thousands' (לְאֲלָفִים, la'alafim)—thousands of generations or thousands of people, either way vastly exceeding judgment's scope. God's 'bent' is toward mercy, not wrath. 'Them that love me' (לְאֶחָדִי, le'ohavai) and 'keep my commandments' (לְשָׁמְרִי, leshomrei mitzvotai) are parallel—love and obedience are inseparable. Jesus says 'if you love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15). Obedience isn't legalism but love's expression. Love without obedience is sentimentalism; obedience without love is slavery. The 'thousands' of mercy swallow the four generations of judgment—grace triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).

Historical Context

The 'thousands' of mercy is literally 'to thousands'—in Hebrew often meaning unlimited/infinite. God's mercy extends exponentially beyond His wrath, revealing His essential nature as gracious.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 – God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the ratio of judgment (four generations) to mercy (thousands) reveal God's character?
2. What is the relationship between loving God and keeping His commandments —can they be separated?

Interlinear Text

וְלִשְׁמָרִי לְאַפְּבִי לְאַלְפִּים עַד שָׁה
me and keep of them that love unto thousands mercy And shewing

מְצֻוֹתִי: my commandments

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 7:9 (Grace): Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations:

Acts 2:39 (Parallel theme): For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

1 John 5:3 (Love): For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

John 14:21 (Love): He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Deuteronomy 5:29 (Word): O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Deuteronomy 4:37 (Love): And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;

John 14:15 (Love): If ye love me, keep my commandments.

1 John 4:19 (Love): We love him, because he first loved us.

2 John 1:6 (Love): And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

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