

28 January 2018

Where is God When I Am In Pain? - The Compassion of God

Opening Prayer

We have seen that much of our suffering is caused by human activities, by human evil. Still, there are some aspects of suffering that appear to be unexplained by human evil. We have no clear explanation for “innocent suffering.” But, it nevertheless exists. If suffering is a part of life on earth which we cannot fully understand, but must accept as a reality of our lives, we should not suffer in isolation. We should not suffer alone. And we do not have to. God continuously offers us his compassion.

While God offers us compassion, we continuously offer competition and consumption. We continuously seek to demonstrate who has the most impressive country, most impressive house, car, degree, children, spouse,...everything. Because we are taught to approach life in terms of individual success and personal achievement, it is difficult to cultivate compassion.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." *Philippians 2:3-4**

Compassion and competitiveness are not compatible. One is God's way and the other is man's way. One leads to life and the other leads to stressful death.

"The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation." *Psalms 145:8-9**

How would you define compassion?

How does God show compassion?

Compassion means a deep awareness of other's suffering within our innermost being and empathy with the sufferings of another. This leads us to the ability to understand the suffering of others and to want to do something about it. In

addition to feeling sorrow for the suffering of others, it directs us to a willingness and an urge to assist them. Compassion is an active emotion. It means that the compassionate individual is moved to far more than to feel sorry. The compassionate individual is moved to do what they can to reduce the suffering...to do more than feel sorry. The compassionate individual truly feels the pain and the sorrow of the sufferer and commits to relieving it to the extent of their abilities.

Is compassion a natural human tendency? If not, why not? If so, why do we harm and kill each other so frequently?

So, how does God exhibit compassion? First, God shows compassion by granting us grace throughout our lives. God give us his free and unmerited favor throughout our lives. It is tempting when we are suffering to live only in that moment, to forget our many blessings. Suffering can be difficult, but we should view life with a longer lens as much as it is possible. God gives us his unconditional love. That is a major indication of God's compassion. God forgives our sins, over and over because God loves us. God sends compassionate individuals to be with us and help us during our times of suffering. It is our obligation to accept their love, compassion, and efforts. Most importantly, God suffers with us. God is with us...Emanuel. We do not suffer alone. God takes on human suffering. The most convincing indication of this is the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. In these events, God's compassion is fully expressed.

We experience the compassion of another when we can feel that they are truly with us. They may not have the perfect words of consolation or may not know exactly the right things to do all the time, but they are with us in our suffering and we know it. We gain strength from that knowledge. God has promised to be with us throughout our earthly experiences. From that, we should acquire strength to move forward through the pain.

What does it mean to you that God is with us?

How do we express God's compassion? Personal examples?

How do we express human competitiveness?

Why are compassion and competitiveness not compatible?

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to

comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” *2 Corinthians 1:2-4**

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...” *Colossians 3:12**

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. *Ephesians 4:32**

Closing Comments

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***All English quotes are from the English Standard Version (ESV)**