

God Cares

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I want to share with you some calls that have been coming in on the phone recently. A man in his thirties called to say, "I have cancer." Another man about the same age called the office and gave the same news: "I have cancer." This is an amazing scientific age we live in; yet, this disease casts an overwhelming shadow. Such words send great waves of fear through the hearts of many people.

Both of these men took the news as well as could be expected. They really love God and are staying positive about all He could do in their situations.

Heartaches and trials bring people to the end of themselves. They often have great difficulty and questions. Their understanding is clouded in many ways. I remember one woman who lived in constant pain from disease until she finally went home to be with Jesus at the age of thirty-six.

To think of her suffering all of those days is very sobering to me.

But God was in all of it. She revealed Christ in a very deep way. It made so many things in my own life seem so small by comparison. She really revealed the heart of God continually.

Her constant testimony was this: God cares.

Suffering can really be an education for us in the perfect plan of God. It can help us to be conformed to His image. Still, I don't want any of us to become detached from the true attitude of our Savior. And that attitude is this: God cares. He knows. He sees. He has great compassion. He is there for each of us. He longs to show us the depth of His care—even in the most difficult of circumstances.

My prayer is that this booklet will provide a measure of comfort to those in need. He sees your hurts. He has been there. He was wounded, rejected, beaten, bruised, and crucified. All of this was done for us. He cares. He so loved the world and He gave Himself for it. May God encourage you with these thoughts.

Chapter One

COMPASSION IN ACTION

“And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14).

If we study the Gospels carefully, we find that this verse is at the heart of Jesus’ attitude toward those in need. He had compassion when He saw the sick, and He healed them. I don’t believe His attitude has changed.

“Well, then why does Jesus allow sicknesses to go on?” you ask.

That is a question only He can answer. “As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him” (Psalm 18:30). We cling to the promise that all things will work together for good (Romans 8:28).

Think with me. Jesus did not indict the sick. He did not challenge them. He had compassion. Compassion brings tears. Jesus had tears when

He met sick people.

God help us not to be complacent or familiar when it comes to bearing one another's burdens. We are called to this in order to fulfill the law of love (Galatians 6:2). May God help us to weep when others weep and rejoice when they rejoice (1 Corinthians 12:26). May God help us to be very sensitive to people. We need to intercede for people, whatever the reason.

Jesus had compassion on the sick.

God cares.

Picking Up the Wounded

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

“And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

“And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

“And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:30-37).

Consider what Jesus communicated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man was beaten up, robbed, and left for dead. A priest—representing religion—came by and refused to help and went to the other side of the road. A Levite—representing adherence to the Law—came by and then passed by on the other side. They did not do a thing to help. They were repulsed by the wounded and beaten man and were insensitive to his needs.

But, the Samaritan revealed the compassion of Christ. He picked up the wounded one, com-

forted him, and got him to a place for healing. This is what we do. We reach and stretch to those in need. We speak words of grace, words of mercy, words of love, and then we watch as the Spirit does a work of reconciliation and restoration. It costs time and it sometimes costs money. But we do not count the cost. We know what God has done for us, and we share in that great fellowship and victory.

Two people came to me recently and spoke of their deep periods of depression. The time is just very dark to them. But I trust that God has a word of hope for them. He is going to touch them deeply and revive their spirits.

Jesus does not just walk on by, but He stops and He answers and He heals. God knows and God cares. He sets captives free. He heals the brokenhearted. This is the God I know and love. This is the God who cares for me.

Chapter Two

GOD IS HERE

We are all growing in the practice of the presence of God. This is what Brother Lawrence described in his little book by that title. In practicing His presence, we recognize many opportunities to manifest His compassion. If we practice how we feel, then we are in trouble. In practicing the presence of God, we are safe and secure in the love of God. Concentration on living in God's presence, this is what honestly can heal any wound we may have.

Jesus Christ is so sensitive in this way.

Many of us who love God go through things. There are times when we think, "Does anyone really care?" Those projections come at us. Then, there are the projections that come at those who want to do something but don't know what to do. "What can I do?" is the thought that goes through our minds.

Really, many of us wish we could be om-

nipresent. We feel so helpless because we cannot do all things or be everywhere at once. But we really wish that we could.

This is where the Body of Christ comes in and does its work. Very practically, the different parts of our ministry work to help the members of our assembly. We are a team, and the team's parts go together. We support and love and pick up each other in so many very practical ways.

The Hungry Are Filled, the Sick Are Healed

One great part of our ministry is the Food Bank. It is a community outreach, and it helps feed people in need. Jesus had compassion on the hungry. It is difficult for us to imagine in this day and this age, when people in some places have so much and are so full. Yet, there are people in other places who are starving. Small children go on from day to day malnourished and with much disease. The pictures of them move us and stir us.

God cares for these people.

Jesus lived a life of prayer and His prayers were for people (Luke 6:12, Luke 11:1). His compassion moved Him to get alone with the Father and intercede for them. That is what His compassion did for Him. It moved Him to prayer.

Compassion also moved Christ to serve in ways that perhaps some of us consider too low for us. In John 13, Jesus clothed Himself with a towel, took up a basin, and then washed the disciples' feet. That is how God cares for His people.

It is even more amazing to me when I consider that just before this example of humility, the disciples were arguing among themselves. The essence of their dispute was centered on who among them would be the greatest. The Lord then showed them that the one who cares is the one who will share in His work and, ultimately, in His glory.

God's compassion moved Him to show His love. This is so beautiful. Compassion moved Christ to work.

Because God has put this compassion in our hearts, we try to answer every letter and card that we receive within two days. That is our practice, and we do it if it is at all humanly possible. We pray, and we answer.

In our office, we do our best to send cards to everyone for birthdays, anniversaries, and get-well wishes. I answer the phone at all hours of the night because of the worldwide character of our ministry. Someone needs a word. The Holy

Spirit is sensitive and compassionate, and the heart of Christ is revealed as He moves.

God cares.

Jesus Christ had compassion on the leper in Mark 1:40-41: "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean."

His compassion made Him the friend of sinners, in Luke 7:34. Christ ate with sinners, still He never compromised with them. He always told them the truth. In His compassion, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. He took each and every sin upon Himself at the Cross. He showed His love to those such as Peter, a man who failed and failed and failed again. God's gentleness made this man great. Peter was reconciled and restored and was used mightily to establish the early Church.

God really cared for Peter and He really cares for us.

Chapter Three

THE WEEPING SAVIOR

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we

have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgres-

sors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:1-12).

The incarnation of Christ—the fact that He, as God, became a man and became flesh and blood so that He could bleed and die for the world—reveals so much about the compassion of God. Love moved Christ to sacrifice Himself for the world. He came and endured the rejection of men. Beyond this, He put Himself into their hands and allowed them to crucify Him, the Lord of glory. He took those nails into His hands and into His feet. That is real compassion. That compassion continues because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

If we really get to know God's heart, He will comfort us with His compassion. He will impart something from His amazing love toward us. His view of the world was eternal and it reflected His great care. He saw the people of Israel as people scattered, a people needing the leadership of the Shepherd, and He came to them.

These people were without a Shepherd, and Jesus was there for them. They had been scattered. Legalism has deprived them of a relationship with the God who called them out of Egypt and who led them out by Moses. Insensitivity

ruled their activities. They were people who were being used to build a work instead the work being used to build the people.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:35-38).

How did Jesus show His care? He gave them words of life. And He wept over them. He saw that people were fainting and had no shepherd. He didn't attack the problem. He didn't accuse them of anything. He was moved with compassion.

In Mark 5, an insane man approached Christ. Jesus did not take the situation lightly. He didn't make jokes about it. He revealed compassion and healed the man, delivering him

from a legion of demons.

Tears for the Lost and for the Dead

In Luke 19:41, we read that Jesus wept as He walked to Jerusalem. These were not tears for the fate that awaited Him. He had always set His face like a flint toward the Cross. He was born to die at Calvary, and He always had that in view.

All of us have some ideas about what Jesus may have had on His mind at that time. When He came to the hill overlooking the city, I believe He was broken hearted over what its rejection of Him and His salvation would mean for the people there. Within a few decades, Jerusalem would be besieged by the Roman Empire and totally flattened. Thousands would perish.

He wept because He was counting the cost that their rejection would bring upon these people. He was weeping for a world that knew Him not. He wept, I believe, because of the hateful, religious system that now eclipsed true spirituality and true intimacy with God. These people were wedded to a system of laws they had no power to keep. They were so confounded that they were constantly manufacturing new rules and new religious concepts. This wicked web of

deceit was strangling the nation.

In John 11:3, Jesus got word from Mary and Martha that their brother, Lazarus, was sick. Jesus didn't move right away, and Lazarus died. Some didn't understand His compassion or His plan, and Mary and Martha were upset when Jesus finally arrived. They knew He had power to heal. Why didn't He come sooner? They thought it was all over for Lazarus. He was dead, and these women were hurt. They knew Jesus but they didn't understand His purpose in this case.

When Jesus arrived on the scene, there was much sorrow. He saw what death had done to this group of people, and He wept. His compassion moved Him. He understood the enemy called death. It was an enemy that only He would be able to defeat at the Cross. But here He revealed His resurrection power, and He called Lazarus back.

This miracle, this great spiritual provision, was given out of amazing compassion. A loved one was given back to a grieving family. He gave them something for their broken hearts.

This is the God who cares.

CONCLUSION

God cares. His compassion moved Him to love, moved Him to die. His compassion moved Him to heal. It moved Him to feed the hungry. It moved Him to lay down His life. It moved Him to sometimes pray all night. It moved Him to eat with sinners.

Sin did not stop Christ's brokenness. Sickness did not interfere with His work. His compassion never fails. His mercies are always new. God cares.

Think of Christ now at the Throne of Grace. He is interceding for us. He is our holy and undefiled High Priest. We can come to Him at any time. We can come to Him boldly in our times of need. No matter the reason, God calls us to come. God cares.

Do not give in to the projections of your feelings and your fears. Let's be so thankful for His care and for His great compassion. It really makes a difference. Have fellowship and com-

munne with God's nature of love. Walk in it. Talk about it. Believe it. This is what heals broken hearts.

God really, really cares.