

GOD'S COMPASSION

When you're not doing well emotionally, what kind of support is it that you most crave from your family and friends? A caring, loving spirit? Acceptance? Most of all, I think it must be compassion.

- What are your feelings on this? What attitude do you most value from your friends when you're having a hard time emotionally?

According to Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology:

"Compassion is that (human) disposition that fuels Acts of kindness and mercy. Compassion, a form of love, is aroused within us when we are confronted with those who suffer or are vulnerable. Compassion often produces action to alleviate the suffering..."

I think that compassion is aroused when we're able to put ourselves in another's shoes. It's the ability to feel with the other person what he/she is going through.

- People often say that those who have experienced depression are better able to have compassion for those who suffer similarly. Is that true for you?
- How would you like to be shown compassion?
- How do you show compassion to others?

A compassionate person might say that what really counts is that in moments of pain and suffering someone stays with us. More important than any particular action or word of advice is the simple presence of someone who cares. When someone says to us in the midst of a crisis, "I do not know what to say or what to do, but I want you to realize that I am with you, that I will not leave you alone," we have a friend through whom we can find consolation and comfort.

(from *Compassion: a Reflection on the Christian Life* by Henri Nouwen (Author), Donald P. McNeill (Author), Douglas A. Morrison (Author))

Now...What about God's compassion? It is often talked about in the Bible, and how we need it when human compassion fails us! God totally understands the pain we go through. In fact He comes alongside us and feels it with us. When Jesus is real to us, as real as He was to the people He healed during His ministry, we too can have peace, being sure that He has that kind of compassion for us too.

A wonderful passage of Scripture is in Lamentations 3

¹⁹ *I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.*

²⁰ *I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.*

²¹ *Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:*

²² *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.*

²³ *They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

²⁴ *I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."*

One passage I love, which I think really speaks to where we are at is in 2 Corinthians 1:

³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.*

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Thomas Chisholm – 1925

Great Is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great Is Thy faithfulness,
Great Is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Refrain

Pardon for Sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain