

## October 4, 2020 James Gallaher The Compassionate Character of God

What does God's Word say to each one of us individually on compassion? After the Israelites were released from slavery in Egypt, Moses was their voice. After going through plagues, Passover, and through the Red Sea, a moment came that the people made a covenant and commitment with God. God was committed to caring for His people. Yet, while Moses goes to speak to God on the mountain, the Israelites break the covenant as the people make a golden calf. Moses comes down and breaks the tablet of commandments. As he goes back up the mountain. Moses wanted to see God face to face but God says that he can't, as he would die.

**Exodus 33:18** *Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"*

**Exodus 33:20** *But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*

No man can see the glory of God so God didn't describe what He looked like but instead He declared His character.

**Exodus 34:6** *Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth..."*

The very first word that God uses to describe His nature is compassionate. Compassion is the very first in regard to His emotional character – not a physical characteristic.

Compassionate means feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others with a desire to alleviate the pain. The word in Hebrew is "Rachum" (compassionate). A synonym is "Rachem" meaning mercy; "Rachamim" is the action form - showing mercy. "Rechem" describes the child in the womb of a woman before it is birthed. The word compassionate has this same root word showing that it is something that comes from within.

Compassion is used as an inward emotion that we have that is experienced in an outward way. Rechem paints a beautiful picture of this emotional place of God deep within that responds to His people. This gives us an understanding of how we can approach God. God leads off with this description of compassion showing first that He is moved from within towards us with a desire to alleviate that place we are at.

The value for us in knowing how God describes Himself is that it gives us an understanding of how we can approach Him. Do we approach God as a compassionate God? God's compassion doesn't have anything to do with how worthy or unworthy we are. It is Who God is. The more we understand the nature of God, the more willing we will be to approach God. What we believe about God influences how we approach Him. Our perspective determines our posture. Seeing God as a compassionate God gives us confidence to go before the throne. If we see God with condemnation, then we'll be fearful approaching God.

**Deut 4:31** *For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.* God's compassion is continually linked to His faithfulness. It is a part of who God is.

**Genesis 1:27** *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.* Therefore because compassion is a part of God then compassion is also a part of every person that God has made.

Compassion is recognizing pain in someone with a desire to alleviate that pain. When we deny that motivation, it begins to affect us on the inside. A definition of compassion by one theologian is the letting go of anger within us. Compassion comes when we understand a person. Withholding compassion when we don't understand them.

God is able to be compassionate because He can see all that is within us. **Judges 21:25** *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* God had compassion on Israel, yet they would turn and do what was right in their own eyes. When they would cry out, God would relent and show them His compassion.

**Nehemiah 9:27-28** *Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their oppressors who oppressed them, But when they cried to You in the time of their distress, You heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors. But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before You; Therefore You abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they ruled over them. When they cried again to You, You heard from heaven, and many times You rescued them according to Your compassion.*

Throughout the Judges, the moral actions of the people didn't matter as much to God as the fact that they cried out. God's compassion would move Him to intervene. This is important for us as a church. Do we consider that we can't come before God because we are worthy? God responds to our cries. God's compassion begs us to come to Him. He is always listening to those willing to cry out.

**Isaiah 49:15-16** *Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palm of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.* Here again God describes His relationship to Israel. It doesn't have to do with worth. Are we willing to come before Him and cry out to Him? Our posture is important as we cry out before God that we need His compassion.

**2 Chronicles 7:14** *and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

We serve a God who is actively listening for our cries so that He might pour out His compassion. God meets the Israelites in the place of crying out no matter how much they wandered. We can approach God with confidence when we see His compassion.

The ultimate rescue is Jesus on the cross, sent by the Father, to come and pay a penalty for us, so that we might have new life in Him. The greatest move of compassion is the moment of salvation – moved from death to life. He will receive us as we cry out...

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.*

Do we spend time asking God to be compassionate when it's Who He already is?

How does understanding the deep place of God's compassion give us boldness to approach Him?

Instead of earning God's compassion, what do we need to do?

Describe God's compassion as from within (like in a womb).