

Compassionate? God's Word?

Jer. 23:16-29

(portions of this sermon quote a May 2, 2017 article by Matt Walsh in *The Blaze*)

<http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/matt-walsh-dear-christians-theres-nothing-compassionate-about-helping-people-get-to-hell/>

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, what is compassionate? Is it compassionate to sit on a lawn chair and watch the neighbor's 4 year old play in the middle of Hwy 22, and do nothing as the traffic whizzes by with whisker's breath to spare? After all, it isn't my child, and if that's how they want to live their life, well, that's their business.

Is it compassionate to know your best friend is going to attempt suicide, and do nothing? It is after all their choice, and you would really hate to anger such a close friend by interfering. Besides, who am I to judge what another wants to do with their own life and body.

Matt Walsh is a Christian columnist, and he writes some insightful stuff. I'd like to share with you a bit of what he wrote in a column on *The Blaze* back on May 2 of this year.

I received this email yesterday. The subject line, as you could guess, was "Compassion."

Matt, you call yourself a Christian but you have no compassion. The Jesus I believe in just wants people to be compassionate towards each other. We are not told to be judgmental to others because of who they love or what lifestyle they choose to have or what gender then identify as. Who are you to say what is wrong or right? We shouldn't be focused on talking about "sin" or telling other people that they might be going to Hell. You have no right to say what "sin" is. Our job is to be compassionate to all! Compassionate isn't when you're judging or telling other people about their sins. I pray that you realize the error of your ways.

Matt's reply is insightful. It is obvious this is a reply to something specific he spoke of. Interestingly, these are the same comments that pastors receive from some when they point out any sin and make a call to repentance.

Mr. Walsh continues with his article:

This is a good example of the bland salad of empty feelings and meaningless sentiment that often passes for "Christianity" in this country. You'll notice that the adherent to this false version of the faith – and they certainly outnumber Christ's true disciples by a large margin in our culture – have kidnapped, tortured, and destroyed many words that were very insightful to Christians. A word like "judge," for instance, has been so often misapplied and misconstrued by the sentimental Christians that the rest of us almost have to leave off using it.

No word or concept, though, has been more thoroughly ruined by the Sentimentalists than "compassion." They have settled on "compassion" as the most noble euphemism for their self-centered and lackadaisical theology, and now they can't seem to talk about their faith for two minutes without tossing it out a dozen times. Unfortunately, there is no indication they actually know what the word means.

The word compassion comes from the Latin for "co-suffering." When we are "compassionate" toward another, we take on their suffering in the hopes of helping them toward some good end. This is what Christ did in the most perfect way when he came to Earth to suffer and die for the sins of man. It was the greatest act of compassion in the history of the universe. The key point in Christ's compassion is that it was a saving act. He did not just come down and give us a hug and say, "Hey, you guys are super. No need to change anything! Good job! Well, anyway, see ya later!" Rather, He shed light on the darkness and corruption of the world and then did something about it. He sacrificed Himself. He suffered with us and for us so that we might go to heaven.

I could continue with the article for it makes some excellent points. Instead, I want to get to our text from Jeremiah.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.' "

There are many who despise God's Word – they know what they want to believe and try to find ways around it. AND, there are plenty of pastors out there who will tell them things are just fine between them and God.

For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened? Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly. "I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds. "Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord. Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

God is rather clear in His words to Jeremiah, there were prophets like those that Mr. Walsh calls Sentimentalists, those who teach a word to keep the people happy, but it is not God's Word. They preached that God is a god of love without any consequences for disobedience, saying that "No disaster shall come upon you." God proclaims of them, "How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies?"

It is clear from this text, that God sees all and knows all, and there will be a day of reckoning for those who want to live in impenitence, who have lived as if God's Word did not matter. But there are still prophets today, pastors in our time, who will proclaim what people want to hear. Many people beg their pastor to prophecy lies, to proclaim something different than God's Word.

And many of the "Sentimentalists" who will call those Christians (and Christian pastors) who preach as God commands, calling sinners to repentance, nasty names, saying they are un-loving, intolerant, lacking in compassion, and uneducated.

Dear friends, Mr. Walsh alluded to it, I will proclaim it to you straight up!

There is not a single one of us who does not deserve God's wrath against our sinfulness. Some hide their sins better than others. One couple commits adultery by sneaking around and falling into bed with one another, thinking that if no one knows about it, then it isn't sin, while the, the other couple does it blatantly by moving in with one another. One person murders their neighbor in the name of god by means of a suicide bomb, another does it with a knife, while still another commits the same act of murder by harboring hatred in their hearts – which of course, nobody knows about.

Everybody knows who you need to call if you want to hear the juiciest tidbits of the latest gossip, even as they hope their own name never crosses those same lips. God's Word declares that those who sit and listen, without speaking in defense of their neighbor, as well as the one running their neighbor's reputation through the mud, are both guilty of violating the 8th Commandment.

Whose sin is worse? The only difference between them is that some are more visible. *All* are damning if there is no repentance on the part of the sinner committing them, and some impenitence is visible as the openly and willfully go back into the same sin.

Dear friends, the compassionate person leaps from their lawn chair and risks their own life to run out into the road and grab the neighbor's 4 year old from the middle of the traffic.

A compassionate friend risks that friendship to make some sort of attempt to get help for their suicidal friend, hopefully saving their life.

A truly compassionate Christian has been called by God to point out sin, leading others to repentance, just as they confess their own grievous and most heinous sinfulness to God. It is to do nothing more than what God proclaimed in our Old Testament lesson, and what has been commanded of God throughout the whole of Scripture. To call others to repentance is to be compassionate, to turn them from their sins to the salvation and forgiveness that is theirs in Christ Jesus.

But too often we confess our own sins, and bow to the worldly pressure and forget about calling our neighbor to repentance. We leave them to be run down by the trafficking opinions of falsehood, or to take their own life by their rampant impenitence – both eternally lost.

Dear friends, I do not stand before you here sinless. I daily fall to my knees and beg God's mercy and forgiveness. I often ask how He could be so stupid as to make of me, someone who has committed both murder and adultery in his heart, to be a pastor in His church. How could God be so naïve as to call someone who has questioned and even hated His Word, to be one to proclaim that same Word to others.

You and I struggle each day against sin.

It is your compassionate God who took on your flesh. He valiantly faced the same temptations you face, yet without sin. As a true man, very God of very God, accomplished what you could not accomplish – He was faithful to all of God's Law, obedient to the Father in keeping it for you and for me.

Then, in His great compassion Jesus took your own sins into His own body, He was baptized into them. He carried them in His flesh to the cross. He bore them in His body nailed to the cursed tree. He bowed His head and gave up His own Spirit in order to accomplish your salvation – to purchase you from sin and death – so that it might be finished for you.

It is the most compassionate thing you and I can do, to call other sinners to the same repentance for the forgiveness of sins that you and I enjoy. What could be more compassionate than to lead others to Christ where there is forgiveness and eternal life?

How wonderfully compassionate it is to proclaim sins forgiven.

How incredibly compassionate to give us His own body to eat, and His own blood to drink, that He might make His dwelling within us.

How astoundingly compassionate to send out those who know the great truths of repentance, forgiveness, and life to those wallowing in the mire of their lostness, so that they too might know that forgiveness and life.

You have been granted the compassion of Christ, in your ears and in your mouth. You have been blessed with forgiveness and life, to be one of the redeemed of God, one of His beloved children.

What a blessing you have been given to bring the true Compassionate One to others that they too might know forgiveness and life. Amen.