

"THE SAME SYMPATHY"

Life is HARD isn't it?

God has made us dual natured – we have a spirit and a body.

Having a body subjects us to a very predictable side effect – we have NEED. We need air, we need food, we need water, we need sleep, we need shelter, we need clothing, we need companionship, we need affirmation, we need wisdom and knowledge...our list of needs is endless...having a body relegates us to a life of need. This need that we have is meant to teach us one very important and obvious fact – that above any other need, we need GOD.

When any of these needs go unmet we begin to suffer.

The bible calls this body of need "WEAKNESS" because it makes us prone to fall into temptation.

Matthew 26:36-46 *"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

When we suffer weakness we begin to think that GOD has rejected us. Is that not what our worldly experience has taught us? Weak things are rejected, weak things are abandoned, weak things are left behind. Nobody wants to be the weak wildebeest!

Personal Story...

I'm inexperienced and have a huge lack of knowledge. Getting an e-mail from the Inspector is not good...it's kind of like getting called down to the principal office...either someone has died or you're about to...the message basically said, "you messed up!" The only thing I was thinking to myself – WEAK WILDEBEAST! WEAK WILDEBEAST! ...I immediately sensed that the inspector detested me...I could hear the axe being sharpened. I sent an apology...then I accepted responsibility...then something quite remarkable happened; he sent back an e-mail and said "no problem -- live and learn". Immediately all fear of rejection vaporized. What had happened? What transaction took place there? With those few words, "no problem – live and learn", he expressed this thing we call sympathy. I immediately realized that all I needed to know was that he understood – that he sympathized with my weakness.

Sympathy is the universal sign of acceptance; it is the universal sign that we are not going to be rejected. Without sympathy we can never be confident that we are accepted. Sympathy is the wagging tail on a dog. Sympathy is the outward demonstration that we have not been rejected; it is the smiling face, the open arms.

One of the hallmarks of Jesus ministry on earth was sympathy. The KJV translates the word sympathy as being "touched with the feeling of" another. Another word the bible uses to communicate the same idea is the word compassion; it is used 14 times in the New Testament and almost always in relation to Jesus.

Matthew 9:36 "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Matthew 14:14 "When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. "

Matthew 13:32 "Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.""

WHAT'S THE SAME: *The Lord Jesus Christ is full of sympathy for his people.*

The basis of sympathy is personal experience.

"What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us. Just a stranger on the bus, tryin to make his way home..."

Isaiah 53:3 "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief..."

Just as Jesus was sympathetic and full of compassion towards peoples' weakness during his earthly ministry, so he remains sympathetic now.

Hebrews 4:14-15 "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is **unable to sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

- Jesus has passed through the heavens and now sits at God's right hand.
- He sits, not as an accuser but as an advocate sympathizing with our weakness

WHAT'S THE GOOD: *We will not be forsaken.*

The great temptation in our weakness is to believe that GOD has rejected us

1John 2:1 "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. "

Hebrews 4:16 *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Hebrew 5:2 *“He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.”*

Hebrews 7:25 *“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”*

WHAT’S THE CHALLENGE: *Do not doubt the LORD’S good intentions toward you.*

Your only assignment today is to look full into the face of Christ who experienced greater weakness than any human has ever experienced, and yet without sin, and hear his sympathetic voice: “I know your weakness.”

The Lord Jesus full of sympathy for whatever weakness you may be experiencing this morning. He is the smiling face of GOD upon you and the ever present reminder that whatever you are experiencing, the LORD’S intentions towards you are good!