

Love of God & Christ for Church & Each Other IV

(Feast of Tabernacles—Day 4)

Michael Heiss—October 12, 2014

Good morning, everyone. We're going to wrap up our series on the love of God and Christ. I'm going to start by referring again to the article in *The Journal*. I'm not going to mention names. You can read all about it, if it's in print it's all here.

I want to use it as an introduction to what I have to say this morning. This is a minister of some kind and he was preaching, and what he said was that he 'was angry with God because of the recent state of illness and deaths of several of his friends. I can understand that; I really can. He said that God had some explaining to do.

I've been quite angry with God over a number of things, especially this year. It might be better not to say I'm totally torked off, but that I'm bitterly disappointed, or I don't understand and I disagree with Him.

Maybe we might see a little bit of Job here. He said that he's not afraid of incurring the wrath of God:

...because I believe that God is big enough and smart enough that He can handle my disappointment.

You know, I prayed every day for quite some time about a particular individual... [who he names as Carl] ...and some of these others who I knew were sick. With Carl, as recently as a week and a half ago I said to God, "You don't do a lot of miracle healings anymore, God, I just don't see it. I don't know why, and You don't have to explain to me why, but how about doing it for Carl. I don't care how we explain it to the world, how about just healing Carl. You can do that; why don't you do that?" I get that way with Him sometimes.

I've asked God regarding a particular individual who was suffering loss of memory, perhaps dementia or Alzheimer's, whatever it was. I've asked God, "Please kill him; take him out of this. What is he learning from this? What is it you want me to learn from this, God. I'm sorry if I'm so thickheaded that I can't learn it, that You have to have him continue to suffer that way. So, what's going on?"

I end up getting angry at Him because life goes on and because He doesn't answer all of our prayers for whatever reasons.

Sometimes he wonders:

...if I'm wasting my time praying for others.

He then winds up here talking about, yes, God is great and He sees the beginning from the end:

Even though I'm just a vapor, even though I'm a nothing to Him.

Obviously, he's not feeling good; he's in sorrow; he's in anguish. But I would like to make something very, very clear. *Not one of us is a **nothing** to God! **Not one!***

- How do we answer this?
- How do we fathom the idea that if God is such a loving, kind, merciful God, He allows such bad things to happen to good people?
- Especially *His* people?

When I was 17-years-old something bad happened to our family. Although we were not in the Church, these things happen.

I knew that my step-dad was sick; turned out it was cancer. He had a toe that just wouldn't heal, a puss in the toe that wouldn't heal. Doctor's amputated the toe, but it was too late, it had spread, it had jumped to the torso by-passed the body and went to his brain. He wound up suffering from horrible headaches.

Then one morning I got dressed—we lived in a two-story house—and I was upstairs getting ready to go down and off to school, and my mom came out of her bedroom, and obviously, she had been crying. She said, 'Daddy died last night.'

Others were saying, 'Not fair.' It's not normal for an 81-year-old father to bury a 51-year-old son. The reverse is fine, we all know that, that's life. You bury your father, but why do you have to bury your son?

Well, we could say, they weren't called and these things happen, and all will be made well in the Great White Throne Judgment. That's true! But why does it happen to those in God's Church? There's a particular reason for it. Now, there may be more than one reason, I'm not saying there's only one, but I want to deal with one.

- How did God show love for Jesus by allowing Him to be beaten and crucified by the Romans—*His only begotten Son?*

- How does He show love to us by letting us—people we know, brothers/sisters, die from cancer, heart disease, stroke, spinal meningitis, dementia, Alzheimer's, you name it.
- Why?
- How can a good, gracious God allow it?
- Is God fair?

That's an interesting word—fair—and it's more of an American word than anything else. On school grounds across this country, and in homes across the country, you hear it said, 'Well, that's not fair. We like fair play.'

- What's fair play?
- What is fair?

We have a President who uses that word quite often. He says, 'American's just want a fair shot.' I have no idea what a *fair shot* is; I really don't. He wants to give us *fair shake*. If I can say, somewhat kiddingly, I know that James Bond likes his drink shaken but not stirred.

- How shaken?
- Shaken in a fair way?
- Shaken in an unfair way?

My point is, I've no idea what a *fair shake* is or a *fair shot*. These are just terms politicians use to try to win votes. We all know that. They all do it in one way or another; whether you're a Democrat or Republican. This is not a particular dig at him.

But if I were making a dig, I would say, 'Well, sir, you've been President for almost six years, what have you done to give us a *fair shot*?'

I do know what fairness is, in a way. I like the game of baseball. I know that if you hit a line-drive down the left field line and it lands on the outside of the line it's foul. But what happens if it lands on the inside of that line? *It's fair! Fair ball, in play!* But I don't think that's what people have in mind. That *fairness* I understand. But fairness with people?

The point is, God dreams BIG! He thinks BIG! He doesn't think the way we do. We live in the here and the now. God explains something. There's a fundamental principle in Isa. 55.

Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways,' says the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your

thoughts'" (vs 7-8). **God thinks BIG!**

In my dentist's office there are different pictures of animals, cute ones. It's a delight to see them, and one in particular—the cat—is in a wastepaper basket. You know cats, they like to be in bags, boxes, it's something about security for a cat. That's a cat thing. Here's this little tabby cat inside the wastepaper basket and it's paws are up over the rim and it's head is looking out and up above it is a white space for the vision and in it is a picture of a massive lion with a huge mane and the caption underneath says: *Dream BIG!* Well, the cat was dreaming big.

God dreams BIG! You look at this whole universe. He doesn't have that just for show. He's got something big in mind and we just don't see it.

In the hymnal, pg. 42, *Amazing Grace*. This song was not part of my repertoire of songs growing up. Within Judaism we don't sing this song, I'll guarantee you we don't. But it was sung and written by a man who was truly a carouser and a drunkard, if you know his story. In some way, somehow he changed. Whether he truly had God's Spirit or not, I don't know, I don't judge. All I know is that his life was turned around. He was so thankful for that, he put his thoughts on paper, and this is his song:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

Fourth stanza:

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sin God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Put another way, when we've been there as glorified sons of God, ten thousand years *times* ten thousand years *times* a hundred thousand years *times* infinity, whatever happened way back when during 20, 30, 40, 60, 80 years of life on Earth will be just a distant memory, if even we choose to remember it.

The suffering that we go through God has a purpose for it. It's the same purpose that He had His Son suffer. Because without our suffering we cannot manifest His love to others. It can't be done!

God is limited. We don't normally think that way. God is all powerful! He says, 'Behold, I will do this.' He's going to do it, and no one is going to stop Him! There is no power greater than His. But when God deals with human beings, He's limited. He's limited to dealing with us. We don't understand as much as He does. We can't grow at the speed that He does.

He's dealing with us, and in order to start that ball rolling, let's see why and how He had His Son suffer. We're going to look at three sections in the book of Hebrews. It's most instructive and emotional.

Hebrews 2:6: "But in a certain place one fully testified, saying, 'What is man, that You are mindful of him, or *the* son of man, that You visit him? You did make him a little lower than *the* angels; You did crown him with glory and honor, and You did set him over the works of Your hands; You did put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing *that was* not subjected to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering the death, in order that by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone" (vs 6-9).

If He did not die for us we would not be alive. He suffered and died, which made possible the manifestation of God's love to us.

Verse 10: "Because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Wait a minute!

- Wasn't He *God*?
- Isn't He *God*?
- What do you mean 'made perfect through sufferings'?
- I thought He was perfect!
- *As a God Being, yes!*

But as a human being, understanding what human beings are:

- their frailties
- their shortcomings
- the nature they have
- the weaknesses they have

Remember what Jesus said, 'The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' He had to live it, to go through all that suffering so that He could become qualified, equipped, to handle us, to intercede for us on behalf of the Father. Without that, God's love could not be manifested to us. It would be impossible.

God the Father does not know, does not fully grasp how we feel, **but the Son does!** That's why Jesus said, 'All authority in heaven and in Earth is given to Me.' Why? *He's equipped to deal with it!* Not that the Father is inconsequential; the Father is a Divine Father of Lights and Spirits, the Head of the clan—God

Almighty, the Mighty El Elyon. No one is greater than He is. But specifically in dealing and working with humans, His Son is the One Who is equipped to do that, because of His suffering.

Verse 14: "Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; and *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death. For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham. For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted *in like manner*, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (vs 14-18).

He is the One Who is able, but only because He went through what He did; only because He suffered can He fully empathize with us.

God didn't show love to His Son by letting Him die on a cross. That's not what He did. **He was showing love to us!** He was preparing His Son to manifest His love to us. If we follow through we will see how our suffering is going to be used by Him in ages to come, to manifest God's love to those who will follow. Otherwise, there is no way He could.

- God is great!
- God is powerful!
- Almighty!

But God cannot deal with millions of human beings at the same time all by Himself, because humans are limited. You have to take time with each human. Oh, He can deal with spirit beings that way. He can create electrons, protons, and neutrons like that. He can fling out the stars. No problem for Him.

But how do you deal with a human being who is fearful, frail, not knowing what to do or how to do it; not understanding. You've got to take time with him, that's why there has to be millions of us to help the millions and billions that we have coming.

Now let's see where Paul goes on with that in Hebrews 4:14: "Having, therefore, a great High Priest, *Who* has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we should hold fast the confession *of our faith*. For we do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *One Who* was tempted in all things according to *the* likeness of *our own temptations*; yet, *He* was without sin" (vs 14-15). He did it so He can help us do it. Again, if He had not gone through it, He

would not be able to truly help us.

Hebrews 5:5: “In this same manner also, Christ did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest, but He Who said to Him, ‘**You are My Son; today I have begotten You.**’ Even as He also says in another *place*, ‘**You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec**’; Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because *He feared God*. Although He was a Son, yet, **He learned obedience from the things that He suffered**; and **having been perfected, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him**” (vs 5-9).

Who is the author of eternal salvation? *Jesus the Christ!* Not the Father. The Father knows that His Son went through it and is best equipped to deal with it, and to judge properly. “...**He learned obedience from the things that He suffered**; and **having been perfected...**” because He suffered. He learned what human perfection was, and He became that Perfect.

Romans 8:16: “The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now, if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—...” (vs 16-17). What Christ inherited we inherit.

“...**if** indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him” (v 17). Without the suffering we will not be equipped. Sometimes the suffering is our own; sometimes the suffering is watching others suffer. Sometimes the suffering is watching a son/daughter, a younger member somewhere struck with a disease, heart attack, stroke, Alzheimer’s, meningitis, you name it, it really doesn’t matter. That happens so that we will learn to feel empathy with a brother. To perfect us so that we will be able to have empathy for all those who come up in the Great White Throne Judgment. It is going to be a mess!

Unless we go through what we’re going through, we’ll never be able to do it. We won’t have the capacity.

Part of our problem—and I must admit that this is true—is that the Church of God in early days so concentrated on one particular verse or two in the book of James, and blew it up out of proportion, about ‘if any be sick, call for the elders, be anointed, you’ll be raised up and the prayer of faith will save you.’

But that does not mean at all times in this life that that will happen. Ultimately it’s in the

resurrection, the kingdom. Now, yes, God does heal! He healed incredibly so during the first generation of the Christians, in the days of Jesus Christ. But some of those healings—we have to face this—were to demonstrate His power. In some cases He healed people who had no idea they were going to be healed.

Remember when James and John in the book of Acts went up to the temple and there was a man sitting there asking for help, and Peter looked at him and said in his famous words: *Gold and silver I don’t have, but such as I have I give to you; in the name of Jesus rise up and walk!* The man was healed. He had no idea, faith had nothing to do with it. Part of it was demonstrate His power.

The Apostle Paul was a mighty apostle, but he had an ailment, a sickness of some kind that we don’t know. He asked God to heal him of it. God said, ‘No.’ Christ said, ‘No.’ This was an apostle who had seen visions of God, Christ taught him personally, and we find:

2-Corinthians 12:6: “But even if I choose to boast, I shall not be a fool; for I will speak the Truth. However, I will forbear, lest anyone think of me above what he sees me *to be*, or what he hears from me. But in order that I might not be exalted by the abundance of the revelations, *there* was given to me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me, so that I might not be exalted. I besought the Lord three times for this, that it might depart from me; but He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (vs 6-9). God said *no!*

Sometimes when people say, ‘God didn’t answer.’ Well, He may well have answered, only the answer was *no!* God knows why.

We all know the story as it was told of a man toward the end of his life was looking back and recounting what had happened during his life and it was like footprints along the seashore. There were two pair of footprints. Many of you know the story, but it’s always good to rehearse it.

As he thought, sometimes there was only one pair of footprints. Why? He scratched his head and then he realized those were the times when he was sick, those were the times when he went through the deepest of trials, and there was only one pair of footprints.

So, he said, ‘God, where were you? Why did you forsake me?’ and God said in His kind way—He didn’t look down, He didn’t ‘diss’ him—‘My son, I never forsook you. You see those times, it was then

that you were so weak that I picked you up and carried you.'

So He does with us! Sometimes He carries us across the finish line and we're in the grave! So, whether we live 20 years, 40 years, 60 years, 80 years, what is it to God? A day is as a thousand years. In fact, you may remember the little story of one guy who went up to heaven and saw God, and said, 'Lord, is it true that a day is as a thousand years with You?' And God responded, 'Just a minute!' A *long* minute.

So, what's our life to God? When someone dies ahead of time, or what we think is premature, suffers a heart attack. He was only 55, 61, is that fair? God smiles and takes that spirit and puts it on His shelf. I don't know if He's got a special vault, but He knows that in the resurrection He will take out that spirit and put it in a spirit body, and He will see a glorified child.

So what is 20 years? 80 years to God? *Nothing!* We need that experience. Have any of you heard of a mighty ship of which it was said, 'Not even God can sink this ship.' Well, we know what happened! The mighty Titanic went down, but did you know something about the captain. He had a perfect record. He sailed all kinds of ships, and they chose him to be the captain, and he backed off. He said, 'Look, I've been a captain, but in all my ships that I've sailed—big ones and small ones—it was smooth sailing. Nothing ever went wrong. What if an emergency occurs, I don't have the capacity to deal with that.'

They still wanted him anyway. We know what happened. He didn't and the ship went down. It was foolish to sail that way in the midst of icebergs. I'm not here to judge the captain. I'm just saying that that captain was ill equipped to captain the Titanic.

God is going to make sure with us that we're not going to be ill-equipped to shepherd His people. We're going to be well-equipped in every way to deal with all peoples.

- we will be kind
- we will be strong
- if we need to be cross a little, we will be cross
- if we need to judge, we will judge

But we will be equipped to handle what He has for us. When bad things happen to good people, remember, God is testing us, trying us, so that we will be able to rule in His kingdom. We will be able to shepherd people to help them.

He will give back the Spirit and as glorified

sons, glorified children, we will manifest His love to all the universe. He doesn't have those planets and galaxies out there for show. He's got a purpose for that, and we're going to be part of that purpose. But unless we suffer now, unless we learn to deal with suffering—our own and to empathize with the suffering of others—we will not be able to properly serve as His sons. He's going to make sure we do!

- Let's not despair!
- Let's not cry!
- Let's not weep so much!

Yes, we sorrow, as Paul said, 'We sorrow, but not as others.' ***We know that one day the trump will sound and all who have suffered in His Church will rise to glory!*** Never forget that!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Isaiah 55:7-8
- 2) Hebrews 2:6-10, 14-18
- 3) Hebrews 4:14-15
- 4) Hebrews 5:5-9
- 5) Romans 8:16-17
- 6) 2 Corinthians 12:6-9

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