

4. God is Passionate and Compassionate (1Q 2025 God's Love and Justice)

Biblical material: Ps. 103:13, Isa. 49:15, Hos. 11:1–9, Matt. 23:37, 2 Cor. 11:2, 1 Cor. 13:4–8.

Quotes

- If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. *Dalai Lama*
- My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style. *Maya Angelou*
- The grace of God is not exhausted. His compassion never ends and it never fails. *Pastor Mensa Otabil*
- Simplicity in Christ is about love and compassion *Peter Nii Korley*
- You will not passionately pursue God if you don't have a revelation that he has passionately pursued you! *Banning Liebscher*
- God created us to live with a single passion: to joyfully display his supreme excellence in all spheres of life. The wasted life is the life without this passion. God calls us to pray and think and dream and plan and work, not to be made much of, but to make much of him in every part of our lives. *John Piper*

Questions

In what ways is God both passionate and compassionate? Why do so many have a negative impression about God's character? How do we reflect these particular aspects of God's character in our lives? How did Jesus show passion and compassion in his life? What lessons can we apply to ourselves? How does this relate to the great controversy?

Bible summary

The Lord is kind and compassionate like a loving father (see Psalm 103:13). In the same way that a mother cannot forget her child, so God cannot forget us (see Isaiah 49:15). Hosea 11:1–9 records God's agonized cry over his wayward people: "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" Matthew 23:37 is Jesus' mourning over Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul talks about having "a divine kind of jealousy." 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 describes the elements of true love.

Comment

The fundamental question is who we are and how we act. We often define ourselves by what we do rather than who we are. Yet as Scripture makes clear, it is who we are that results in what we do—though what we do certainly is very important and reflects our motives and priorities.

Our trust in God has results. We *do* something. Our beliefs have consequences—which is why making sure what we believe is right is so important! You can't "simply believe" without asking "believe in what?" We don't simply hear and accept, but we act on what we hear—on what we have now become as trustworthy children of our heavenly Father.

The great good news is that it's not about us! "We are not promoting ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord. In fact we are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said, 'Let light shine out of the darkness,' shone in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, to show that this supreme power comes from God and not from ourselves." 2 Corinthians 4:5-7.

We are the clay jars that contain the gospel treasure! It is in the incredible condescension of God that we are granted this immense privilege—but the value is not in the clay jars... We are simply the "containers" for God's saving grace and he is the one who is vindicated in his "being and doing." We are to delight to be part of this demonstration that shows God to be completely honest and true, loving and gracious, showing healing, mercy, and compassion to all who come to him!

So when it comes to God's passion and compassion, we have something to share! The story of the great controversy comes into play here. In responding to the Devil's accusations, God has to demonstrate the truth of his character and the wisdom of his government. This takes time, and calls for great passion and compassion on the part of God as he seeks to work through the issues raised in this rebellion.

Only as the conflict is resolved through the unmasking of evil's real face, only as God is demonstrated to be the loving, compassionate Being he says he is, only as all his creation agrees with him that he was right all along—only then can God bring this rebellion to a close. Those who have chosen the Devil's way will be allowed their choice of final non-existence in the end-time destruction. And then, and only then, can God create a new heaven and a new earth, a place where righteousness dwells and the goodness of God reigns supreme (see 2 Peter 3:13).

The most convincing proof of truth is demonstration. What is true is most clearly seen in action—in the way what is good and right are revealed in each changing situation.

We're called to be passionate for truth and goodness, to be kind and compassionate to one another. Those are easy words to say; how much harder to do! Is this just a matter of keeping a command—doing what we are told because God says so—or is it far more a matter of sharing in the very nature of the character of God? Only as we discover that God's way is the only way, that right is right and makes such good sense, that we love to truly love—only then can we truly follow this "command."

Ellen White Comments

The whole spiritual life is molded by our conceptions of God; and if we cherish erroneous views of his character, our souls will sustain injury. We should see in God one who yearns toward the children of men, longing to do them good. He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. All through the Scriptures, God is represented as one who calls, woos by his tender love, the hearts of his erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of their children as is God with those he seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaty to the wanderer than does he. O shall we not love God, and show our love by humble obedience? Let us have a care for our thoughts, our experiences, our attitude toward God; for all his promises are but the breathings of unutterable love. {RH January 14, 1890}

Without Christ there can be only condemnation and a fearful looking for a fiery indignation, and final separation from the presence of God. But he whose eyes have been opened to see the love of Christ, will behold the character of God as full of love and compassion. God will not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son. The sinner will cry with the psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). All despair is swept from the soul when Christ is seen in His true character. {ISM 371}

God sends you into the world as His representatives. In every act of life you are to make manifest the name of God. {AG 94}

God has enjoined the duty upon His human agents to communicate the character of God, testifying to His grace, His wisdom, and His benevolence, by manifesting His refined, tender, merciful love. . . . Our work is to restore the moral image of God in man through the abundant grace given us of God by Jesus Christ. . . . Oh, how much we need to know Jesus and our heavenly Father that we may represent Him in character! {AG 229}

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship Him in spirit and in truth... He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them, who treated them despitefully. In this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {FE 177} Prepared September 7, 2024 © Jonathan Gallagher 2024

