

Is God Always Kind?

by J.R. Miller

God's loving-kindness is always present and working for our good, even if it means letting us suffer.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 54:10

Topics: "God's Kindness", "Suffering and Growth"

Description

J.R. Miller explores the theme of God's unwavering kindness, emphasizing that while human love can lack gentleness, God's loving-kindness is eternal and comforting. He illustrates that true kindness may involve allowing suffering for the sake of growth and character development, much like a parent who permits necessary pain for a child's well-being. Miller reassures that even in times of trouble, God's love remains constant and is often revealed most profoundly in our moments of need. He encourages believers to trust in God's loving-kindness, which is always present, even when circumstances seem harsh. Ultimately, Miller concludes that God's kindness is not merely about comfort but about shaping us into better versions of ourselves.

Transcript

The Bible takes especial pains to assure us of the everlastingness of God's love. In one passage, for example, it is declared that while even the mountains shall depart, God's loving-kindness shall never depart from his people. The word loving-kindness suggests all that is sweet, tender, and comforting in love. There are men who love--yet are not kind. They would give all they have to help a friend--and yet they lack gentleness. They are stern, severe, brusque. They have not a gracious manner. They are not kind. Kindness is love's best. It not only gives--but gives in a way that adds a hundredfold to the value of the gift.

Kindness in this passage is made still tenderer, by the qualifying word 'loving', loving-kindness. There may be kindness which is not loving.

It is a great comfort to know that God's power shall not depart, is eternal. Nothing ever can sweep away our refuge in the almighty strength of God. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." Psalm 46:1-3

But power is cold--it lacks heart. The word loving-kindness means far more. It suggests affection, tenderness, all that is warmest, tenderest, and most comforting. The assurance is, that the

loving-kindness of God shall not fail. There never will be a day or an hour, when he will not be kind. Can he be a father--and not be kind to his children? The Bible is full of the most exquisite revealings of God's kindness. "Like as a father pities his children, so Jehovah pities them those who him." "As one whom his mother comforts--so will I comfort you." "The mountains may depart--but my loving-kindness shall not depart from you."

It is also in the Old Testament, that we find another exquisite picture of the divine loving-kindness. In his farewell address Moses said to his people, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." There is comfort in the embrace of a father's or a mother's arms. But we are not sure that we shall have these arms very long; no human arms are everlasting. The arms of God, however, will never unclasp their hold. Then they are ever underneath. We cannot fall out of their clasp. However low we may sink in weakness or in pain--these arms will always be underneath us. Indeed it is only when the mountains do depart--that we can know the best of the kindness of God. It is when father and mother are gone--that the Lord takes us up into the closest, tenderest love. We need his love most then, and the need enables us to find the blessing.

In the days of earthly prosperity and gladness, when human love is around us with all its sweetness, tenderness, and satisfyingness, we do not find, do not realize, the best of God's loving-kindness. It is concealed in the fullness of human love and earthly blessing which we enjoy. It is only need that finds and reveals the best things. But when trouble comes and the earthly good things that have meant most to us are stripped off--then we find the infinite blessings of the divine kindness. We would never see the stars--if the sun did not go down. We would never discover the grace and loving-kindness of God--if there were never a break in our earthly joy. We would never know the wonder of God's comfort--if we had no sorrow. It is when the visible mountains depart, and we have them no longer to hide in--that our hearts find the mountains of God, with their eternal refuges.

But does God's kindness ever depart from us? Are there no days when he really is not kind to us? Are there no experiences in our lives when we can say, "God is not kind to me today?" Such questions as these, are continually asked by those who are in trouble or sorrow, those who have had great losses or bitter disappointments.

"Where can you find the loving-kindness of God, in my experiences of the past months?" one asks. We may not be able to interpret the meaning of these strange providences, which so often stagger the faith of earnest souls. We do know, however, that there never is a break in the divine loving--even when our eyes can see no love.

We are sure, for example, that God knows all the things that try us. The prophet taunted the worshipers of Baal when, after calling upon their god all day, they got no answer, and said: "Cry aloud. Either he is musing, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened!" But there can be no such taunts concerning our God, for he is never absent when we call, nor asleep, needing to be awakened, nor ignorant of our condition, needing to be informed.

Does he know all that we suffer--and yet send no relief? Does he know the wrongs his child is enduring--and not interfere to check their continuance? Does he know the pain your friend is experiencing, hear the prayers that are made so agonizingly, and yet bring no help? Yes, he knows! The crippled girl in Ralph Connor's story, could not understand how God could be good--and let her suffer so. Her friend asked her about the plaster jacket the doctors had put on her. "Did it hurt you when they put it on?" "It was awful," she replied, shuddering as she thought of it. "What a pity your father wasn't there!" said her friend.

"Why, he was there." "Your father was there, and did not stop the doctors' hurting you so cruelly?" "Why, he let them hurt me. It's going to help me, perhaps make me able to walk about some day." "Oh, then they did not hurt you in cruelty, just because they wanted to? I mean that your father loves you, though he let you be hurt; or, rather, he let the doctors hurt you just because he loves you, and wants to make you well."

The girl became very thoughtful. Presently the light began to shine in her face. Then she asked, as the mystery of it all began to become clear to her, "Do you mean that though God let me fall and suffer so, he loves me?" Her friend nodded. Presently she said, as if to herself, "I wonder if that can be true."

We are sure also that God could relieve us of the things that are so hard for us to bear--could, if he desired to. There is nothing that God could not do. Pilate boasted to Jesus that he had power to crucify him, or to release him, as he chose. "No!" said Jesus; "you can have power over me--only as it is given you from above." This is God's world, and nothing can get out of God's hands. "My loving-kindness shall not depart from you."

What, really, is God's loving-kindness? At first we may think it is only tenderness, that it is always pitiful and compassionate, that it cannot permit pain or suffering. But is that God's kindness? There are two ways of showing kindness. One is by being always tender and keeping our loved one from every roughness, every self-denial, by letting him always have his own way--that is what some people mean by kindness. Some parents show this sort of kindness to their children, denying them nothing, never restraining them, never permitting them to suffer anything that would give pain. The other sort of kindness thinks of the best things, and seeks the good of the child, not merely his ease or pleasure.

Sometimes God lets us suffer, causes us to suffer. Is he then unkind? Does a loving parent never willingly let his child suffer? Your child is hurt, has a foot crushed under a car-wheel on the street. The surgeons consider what should be done and decide that there must be an amputation, or the child's life cannot be saved. As the little one is carried to the operating room, would you begin to cry out that the doctors are unkind, cruel? Oh, no! It does not seem kindness to use the knife--but you know it would be most cruel unkindness not to do it in the circumstances.

When God says to you in the morning, "My loving-kindness shall not depart from you," he does not mean that you will have no suffering, no self-denial, no pain, no hardship; he means that the whole course of his treatment of you that day--will be toward the fashioning of your life into Christlikeness, the training of your powers for usefulness. Sometimes he will let you suffer, perhaps torturingly, seeming to disregard your happiness. But it is just because he loves you--that he does this. If he saved you from all suffering and pain--he would really be unkind. Some day you will understand that the truest kindness is always that which makes your life better, richer, nobler, and a greater blessing to the world.

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