

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, March 13, 2011
God is Compassionate

This past Friday our hearts were wrenched as we heard the news and began to see the video footage of the devastating effects of an 8.9 magnitude earthquake off the Northeast coast of Japan that spawned a ferocious tsunami causing massive destruction and the loss of life. Our prayers were offered on behalf of the hundreds of thousands that have been affected by this disaster. I'm sure that many wonder how God could allow this to happen. Why doesn't he just stop it when he has the power to do so? The disciples had a similar question as they were out on the sea. **Mark 4:37-41** *A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.* ³⁸ *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"* ³⁹ *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* ⁴⁰ *He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* ⁴¹ *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"* They couldn't believe the miracle worker was sleeping on a cushion in the back of the boat. They woke him up. (Let's just pause here for a moment. Isn't it great that Jesus could actually sleep during a storm that had these seasoned fishermen quaking in their boots? I believe he was also giving us a message in that. We can have the peace of God in the midst of dire straits.) He immediately took care of the problem with the spoken word, a mere authoritative declaration to the elements. Then he asks them why they were so afraid and did they still have no faith. He seems to have assumed that they should have gotten it by now. They had seen him in action demonstrating not only his power, but his love and compassion.

God is compassionate. Jesus came to demonstrate the very nature of God. The disciples' attributing Jesus' sleeping in the back of the boat as not caring was way off base. Yet that is how we can feel in the midst of trying circumstances. We want God to just take care of every situation seemingly without our participation, as though we are without any ability to be part of the solution. Jesus seemed to be a little taken back by their fear and lack of faith. He was in effect saying that what he did, they could do, a message that he taught later in more detail. We must never lose sight of the fact that God does not change. He is always the same. The Old Testament reveals him as a God of compassion and slow to anger. David knew this when he wrote **Psalm 51** following his encounter with the Prophet Nathan who brought the word of the Lord and conviction for David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba. *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.* ² *Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.* ³ *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.* He went on to say, ¹⁰ *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* ¹¹ *Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.* ¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.* ¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.* Notice that David did not lose the Holy Spirit because of his sin, but he did lose the joy of his salvation. He wanted God to touch his heart again so he could once again walk in a close relationship with him. That's where the joy comes from. David tells God that when he restores him, people are going to know about it because David is going to get the word out. The Apostle Paul brings some insight here as well. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** ³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,* ⁴ *who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

Let's always keep at the forefront of our hearts and minds that God is good and compassionate. He cares and he has equipped us with the power of the Holy Spirit to be just like Jesus, doing what he did. When difficulties arise, rather than complaining and wondering where God is in the midst of our troubles, let's maintain a positive mindset and the realization that his nature and his power are at work within us. Let's speak to the wind and the waves. Let's cast the mountain into the sea. Let's try using the authority he's given us. We have nothing to lose!