

Perspectives

The Value of Life

I recently watched a documentary on the Auschwitz concentration camp. Auschwitz was “a complex of over 40 concentration and extermination camps operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland (near the town of Oświęcim) during World War II and the Holocaust.”* It is estimated that between 1.1 and 1.5 million died in this camp, which included men and women, young and old. Among them: Jews (who made up 90% of the death toll), non-Jewish Poles, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war, and other Europeans. Those not gassed died of starvation, exhaustion, disease, executions, beatings, and medical experiments.

The beginning of the documentary focused on how the Jewish people were stripped of all their property and dignity, forced to live in poverty, and herded into train cars like cattle to be taken to the concentration camps. The cruelty was overwhelming. As I watched I couldn't help thinking, “How could people treat other people in such a horrific way?” One thought kept coming to me: *When we devalue human life or dehumanize others, we lose our capacity to care how we or others treat them. We no longer see them as God's creation (fellow humans), but apathetically view them as objects.*

Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God has shown and proven His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for “us.” The us includes everyone. God's love is not dependent on our actions, attitudes, zip code, ethnicity, economic status, and so on. He loves us! God values all human life so much that He “gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).”

Not only does God love all humankind, He calls us as believers to love all humankind. Romans 12:10-20 speaks of loving others, helping the needy, seeking peace with all, and showing love and compassion to those we might consider our enemies. When we value all human life, loving others through the power of the Holy Spirit, God gives us the capacity to treat others with Christlike love (which includes taking a stand when people are devalued and dehumanized by others).

God values life—all life. We, who are recipients of God's love and grace, are called to value all life too. During this focus on the message of Romans, pray that God would open your eyes to the ways you can value life by expressing His love to everyone.

May God bless you as you study His Word this quarter!

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*<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auschwitz_concentration_camp> Accessed January 28, 2020.