

# Compassion - Part 1

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I want to begin today with a short story on compassion. The story states this:

A woman and a man, who had been married for twenty-five years, were looking through a family photo album. As the pictures took them back through the years the wife, thinking that she was making a compassionate statement, began to comment on how much hair her husband used to have and how handsome it made him look when he was younger. Later that evening the wife saw an ad which read the following: miracle formula will cover bald spots in twenty-four hours. Well, being the compassionate wife she thought she was, she told her husband. Both were excited and both, of course, were very curious. The next morning the husband called the manufacturer. How can you cover my bald spot in twenty-four hours, he asked? We've got a patented miracle formula came the reply. It's basically a mixture of persimmon and alum. The balding caller was quite skeptical. You mean that will grow hair, he asked? No. The reply came. It doesn't grow hair. What it does is shrinks your head to fit what you have.

Was this compassion? Well, the motive of the wife might have been right, but what an outcome.

We may think we know what compassion is, but do we really? What is the dictionary definition of compassion? What does God have to say about this particular subject? Are there examples of compassion in scripture? Is it something that a Christian should have and, if so, how do we apply compassion in our lives? These are all very good questions. Many of these, not all, will be answer in the next sixty to seventy minutes.

First of all, what exactly is compassion? Bing Dictionary, powered by Oxford Dictionaries, defines compassion as *sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings and misfortunes of others*. Synonyms for compassion listed by the same resource are *pity, sympathy, empathy and fellow feeling*. I find that interesting. The Guidepost Family Topical Concordance of the Bible defines compassion as *suffering with and for another, desire to relieve another's distress*. I personally feel this is the best of the definitions I could find on compassion.

Today in this sermon, we are going to take a Bible study approach to this particular subject. We are going to reference many, many scriptures regarding compassion and see how each of these scriptures support the definition of *suffering with or for another, desire to relieve another's distress*.

Let's begin by turning to 1 Peter 2:21 from the New International Version. Granted this section of 1 Peter is specific to a slave's relationship to his or her master, but it's the principle brought out in this scripture that we want to apply as we begin this study on compassion.

**1 Peter 2:21.** *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you ... (NIV)*

Here is the application of the definition; Christ suffering for each of us.

*21b) ... leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (NIV)*

Three aspects of this scripture should absolutely jump off the page to each and every one of us as we read. First, Christ suffered, was compassionate for whom? I think we understand it was for each of us. The Passover is but eight days away. Dwell on that as we move through our self-examination prior to taking the Passover. Our savior, Jesus the Christ, suffered for each of us due to his compassion for each of us. Again, our definition is suffering with and for another, desire to relieve another's distress.

A second aspect of this particular scripture that should just jump out from the page is that we should follow the example that Christ left for each of us. What was that example? It was suffering.

Number three is found at the very beginning of the verse. To this you were called. We should stop at this point and ask: To what were we called? The answer is found in the previous verse, verse 20.

*20) But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. (NIV)*

Then the thought process continues in verse 21. In this physical flesh we suffer and that's probably an understatement. Just read the weekly updates. We get a full picture of the suffering and in some cases the torment that many, many of the brethren are going through. We are called to suffer. Christ suffered for each of us. Christ left us an example that we should follow his steps, suffering one for another. Is this not our textbook definition for this message; suffering with or for another and/or having a desire to relieve another's distress?

Based on these two verses let's begin to study this topic of compassion. We're going to study it from Christ's example. Let's begin by going to Matthew 11:28-30. I will be reading from the New King James Version throughout this message, unless it's otherwise noted.

**Matthew 11:28.** *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

*30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (NKJV)*

Here we find Christ's compassion expressed towards the weary; Christ's compassion expressed to those who are heavily laden with the burden of labor. Laden simply means *heavily loaded*. I was trying to think of an example to use on that. For those who have been out to our house, you know that Shelley and I have a few fruit trees, one of which is a plum. This past summer I had to prop up nearly every heavy laden limb on this particular fruit tree, fearing that the limbs would break under the weight of the fruit, and that was even after thinning the fruit as it began to produce.

Here we find Christ giving us an example that we should follow, that of his desire to remove another's distress.

Turn please turn to Hebrews 2:14-18 from the New Living Translation.

**Hebrews 2:14.** *Because God's children are human beings - made of flesh and blood - Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in a human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.*

15) *Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.*

16) *We all know that Jesus came to help the descendants of Abraham, not to help the angels*

17) *Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus to be in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he would be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of his people.*

18) *Since he himself has now gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted. (NLT)*

In verse 14 we find that the Word, who was born of the flesh as Jesus Christ did so to experience suffering as a human. In verse 18 we find his desire to remove another's distress, as he himself suffered with each of us. Christ's compassion here is directed to those tempted, those under various trials of life. The word "tempted" in the Authorized Version is Strong's number 3985. It is transliterated from the Greek as "peirasqei" and it means *to test, as in a trial*.

Turn to Mark 9:17-27 from the New Living Translation.

**Mark 9:17.** *One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, "Teacher, I brought my son for you to heal him. He can't speak because he is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk.*

18) *And whenever this evil spirit seizes him it throws him violently to the ground and makes him foam at the mouth and grind his teeth and become rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out this evil spirit, but they couldn't do it."*

19) *Jesus said to them, "You faithless people; how much longer must I be with you until you believe? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." (NLT)*

The King James Version reads, "bring him to me." In these four words we find the desire on the part of Christ to help the boy, the desire to relieve another's distress. Again, that's our definition of compassion.

*20) So they brought the boy, but when the evil spirit saw Jesus it threw the child into violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground writhing and foaming at the mouth.*

*21) "How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the father. He replied, "Since he was very small,*

*22) The evil spirit often makes him fall into the fire or into water trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us. Do something if you can."*

*23) "What do you mean, if I can?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." (NLT)*

Here we find, brethren, admonition for each and every one of us today.

*24) The father instantly replied, "I do believe; but help me not to doubt!" (NLT)*

Again, these words are here for our application in our lives.

*25) When Jesus saw the crowd of onlookers was growing he rebuked the evil spirit. "Spirit of deafness and dumbness," he said, "I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!" (NLT)*

This is a command by Christ, a command that is full of compassion.

*26) Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy lay motionless and he appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd-"He is dead."*

*27) But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet and he stood up! (NLT)*

Again, brethren, we find here an act of compassion on the part of Christ, not only healing this young boy, but actually helping him up to his feet; a great deal of compassion found here. Here we find the compassion of Jesus Christ being expressed towards the helpless, a young boy in this case who was demon possessed.

Go back to Hebrews 4:14 and we'll read through Hebrews 5:8. We will read with this understanding and in the original text there were no chapter breaks.

**Hebrews 4:14.** *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

*15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses ... (NKJV)*

Again, this is because of his humanity. Jesus Christ, our high priest, can and does understand humanity, can and does have compassion.

*15b) ... but was in all points tempted [tested] ... (NKJV)*

It's the same Greek word that we found earlier in Hebrews 2:14.

*15 continued) ... as we are, yet without sin.*

*16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)*

**Hebrews 5:1.** *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*

*2) He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.*

*3) Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.*

*4) And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*

*5) So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."*

*6) As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek";*

*7) who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,*

*8) though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (NKJV)*

Once again, this is something to think about as we approach the Passover.

What we read here, brethren, is like the example of Aaron, a physical priest, Christ, our high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, can and does have compassion on the ignorant and on those going astray. The word "ignorant" found here in verse 2 is Strong's number 50. It's translated as "agnoeo" and Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines this word as *not to understand or to err or sin through a mistake*.

Another example taken directly from the life of Jesus Christ is his compassion towards the sorrowful. Turn please to Luke 7:11-15. Jesus was about a day's journey, about twenty-five miles from Capernaum, where he had just healed a centurion's servant. Now he comes across a funeral procession and a sorrowful mother.

**Luke 7:11.** *Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain ... (NKJV)*

Nain is a small city some 8.5 miles southwest of Nazareth.

11b) ... and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd.

12) And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her.

13) When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." (NKJV)

We find here Christ suffering with another, this widow whose only son had just died.

14) Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."

15) So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. (NKJV)

We find here a woman of this particular city who was a widow, a mother of only one son and that her only son was dead. We find here a funeral procession. Here in the New King James Version only ten words are spoken by Christ. The mother in this case did not have to prove her faith. She did not have to plead her case to have Christ resurrect her only son. Jesus Christ, coming upon the funeral procession saw the mother. He felt compassion for the mother and he stated to the mother, do not weep. Christ then touched the casket and said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." Christ had a desire to relieve another's distress, in this case a mother, in this case a widow who was in distress.

There are various other examples of Christ expressing compassion and I would urge each of you to pick up or to go online to any topical concordance and do a study on the compassion of Christ.

In the Old Testament we also find compassion expressed by God. Turn first please to Lamentations 3:21-25. We find Lamentations wedged between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We don't visit this book very often, so we're probably not as familiar with this book of the Old Testament as we should be. It's a book that was written by the prophet Jeremiah in response to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in about 587 BC. It tells us of the horrible destruction and loss of life and starvation through siege. It's only a book of five chapters, but in the middle of this book there are some very kind and considerate words that Jeremiah was inspired to write about God.

**Lamentations 3:21.** *This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.*

22) *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.* (NKJV)

The word "compassions" here is the Hebrew word "racham" and it's Strong's number 7356. The meaning, I find, is most interesting. The meaning is *that of a tender love the cherishing one would have for a fetus in the womb*. I would suggest that that tender love of a fetus in the womb is something I, of course, have never experienced. You

mothers certainly have. I would suggest that this is a very, very intimate form of compassion that Jeremiah is speaking of here. In addition note that the word compassions is in the plural. Here we're being told that compassions from God's perspective are numerous, possibly multi-faceted.

*23) They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*

*24) "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"*

*25) The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.  
(NKJV)*

Then in a partial explanation of how this can be, in the midst of the great sufferings in chapters 1 and 2 of this book Jeremiah is inspired to write in verses 32 and 33 the following.

*32) Though He [God] causes grief, yet He [God] will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.*

*33) For He [God] does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. (NKJV)*

This means that the mercies of God are often hidden and they are hard to recognize when they are happening. He does cause grief. We read that in verse 32. God does allow affliction. We read that in verse 33. We must come to understand that all of this serves another purpose, a merciful purpose if we trust in our God.

It's the same as the lesson in the book of Job, who lost everything. We're not going to go to the book of Job. We're actually going to go to the book of James. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote in James 5:11 regarding Job and I quote from the New International Version.

**James 5:11.** *As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (NIV)*

Those inspired words were written by the brother of Jesus Christ himself. In all of our afflictions God's aim is and God's aim always has been compassion and mercy. You could sum it up in the way that Susan and Marshall Shelley did in the latter part of 1991. I don't know the Shelleys. I am not aware of their Christian affiliation, but based on the short story you are about to hear, one can assume that they've read the scriptures and one can assume that from a Christian perspective they have a basic understanding of scripture.

For nine months the Shelley family waited in anticipation for the birth of their first son. On Friday, November 22, 1991 the anticipation was coming to an end. Joy was in the air. The home nursery was completed and motherhood and fatherhood were just moments away. The Shelleys' first son was born at 8:20 p.m. November 22, 1991 and their first son died at 8:22 p.m. November 22, 1991, two minutes later. The nurse asked, do you have a name for the baby?

Susan said, "Toby." Susan said, "it's short for the Biblical Tobiah, which means God is good." A month later when Susan's husband, Marshall, was attending an alumni meeting at Wheaton College, Marshall told a story of Toby's very short life. Marshall stated, "I was with my son his entire life [two minutes]. He entered the world, this world of light and air at 8:20 p.m. on November 22, 1991 and he departed, the doctor said, at 8:22 p.m. November 22, 1991. It seemed a very short time, too short. My wife, Susan, and I never got to see him take his first steps. We barely got to see him take his first breath. I don't know if he would have enjoyed softball or if he would have enjoyed software. I don't know if he would have enjoyed dinosaurs or dragonflies, machines or math. We never got to wrestle, race or read; would he have enjoyed those things like his older sisters do. What would have made him laugh? What would have made him scared? What would have made him angry?" Marshall goes on to state. "These questions swarmed around in my mind for days following my son's arrival and his all-too-hurried departure. So many things I wondered, but one question loomed larger than the rest. One question haunted me for weeks, if not months. Why would God create a child to live only two minutes?"

It's a great question for us to ponder, brethren. One might say that the expectations, the joy and the hope of a new member for the Shelley family ended in sadness, but that's not the end of the story. Marshall Shelley concluded his speech with the following.

Why did God create a child to live two minutes? He didn't. He didn't create Toby to live two minutes. He didn't create me to live forty years, or whatever number of years He may choose to extend my life in this world. God created Toby for eternity. He created each of us for eternity, where we may be surprised to find our true calling, which always seems to be just a little out of reach here on the earth. Marshall summed up his speech by stating, "Life is hard and God is good."

You see brethren, that is laments. Life is hard. Ask anyone of the brethren who are on the weekly updates. I am confident that they all would agree that life is hard, but you see, God is good for all is to His purpose. Have we really come to not only see but to truly comprehend the compassion, the mercies of God in each of our lives? If we truly did, would we not thank Him each and every day that we breathe for His compassions? As we read in Lamentations, they're new every morning.

Lamentation simply means *the passionate expression of sorrow*. Put it in this perspective. Do we truly understand the pain our spiritual Father felt at His Son's death, the pain felt as He watched His Son inhumanely beaten, the sacrifice that His Son went through for each of us so we could be reconciled to our heavenly Father? That was the most selfless, most compassionate act that any being has ever gone through on the parts of both the Father and the Son. Why do I refer to that as a compassionate act? It is because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was a desire on the parts of Christ and our Father to relieve our distress. They suffered for another. They suffered for you. They



suffered for me. Don't think it was easy for the Father to see His Son go through such. It was done for you and it was done for me. It was done for all who are living or who have ever lived. It was done to God's purpose. Think about that as we draw closer to the Passover.

Let's revisit Lamentations 3:22-23.

**Lamentations 3:22.** *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.*

23) *They are new every morning ... (NKJV)*

As stated earlier, His mercies, compassions are everlasting. They're new every morning, each morning of each week of each month of each year. Turn please to Psalms 78:4-8. It's a psalm of Asaph from the New Living Bible.

**Psalms 78:4.** *We will not hide these truths from our children ... (NLT)*

Those truths are found in verse 1 and it's in reference to the law and various other sayings mentioned in verse 2.

4b) *... but will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of his power and the mighty miracles He did.*

5) *For he issued his decree to Jacob. He gave his law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children,*

6) *so the next generation might know them - even the children not yet born - that they in turn might teach their children.*

7) *So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands.*

8) *Then they will not be like their ancestors - stubborn, rebellious and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God. (NLT)*

We find here in these five verses a reminder for each of us, for we are spiritual Israel. We do have a tie to the children of Israel of Exodus. Beginning in verse 12 Asaph goes on to tell of all the wonderful works which the Lord performed for Israel and in spite of all of this the children of Israel sinned and they paid the price of not entering the promised land. We pick up the story in verses 38-39 from the New King James Version.

38) *But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath;*

39) *For He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again. (NKJV)*

Barnes Notes has this to say about verse 39 and the compassion of the God of the Old Testament:

[For He remembered that they were but flesh] that they were human; that they weak; that they were prone to err; that they were liable to fall into temptation. In His dealings with them He took into view their fallen nature; their training; their temptations; their trials; their weaknesses and He judged them accordingly. So it was with the savior and the treatment of the disciples.

Barnes Notes says to compare Psalms 103:14 and he quotes Matthew 26:41 here.

**Matthew 26:41.** ... *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (NKJV)

Barnes continues:

God will judge people as they are; He will not in His own judgments forget that they are people, and that they are weak and feeble. People often judge their own fellow-men with much more harshness, with much less allowance for their infirmities and weaknesses, than God shows in His dealings with mankind. And yet, such are the very people who are most ready to blame God for His judgments. If God acted on the principle and in the manner according to which they act, they could hope for no mercy in His hand. It is well for them that there is not one like themselves on the throne of this universe. [A wind that passes away and comes not again] which blows by us, is gone forever. What a striking description this is of man! How true of an individual! How true of a generation! How true of a race at large! God remembers this when he thinks of His people, and deals with them accordingly. He is not harsh and severe, but kind and compassionate, for all is to His purpose. To man, a being so feeble-to the human race, so frail-to the generation of that race, so transitory, so soon passing off the stage of life- He is ever willing to show compassion. He does not make us of his great power to crush them; he prefers to manifest his mercy in saving them."

We find, brethren, the God of the Old Testament, a very compassionate God because all is to His purpose. Yet, with all this compassion we must also come to understand that God is indeed sovereign. Please turn to Romans 9:15.

**Romans 9:15.** *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."* (NKJV)

The New Living Translation gives us a better understanding, I believe, regarding God's sovereignty.

15) *For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."* (NLT)

Here Paul is quoting from Exodus 33:19 giving us insight as to the reason God did not destroy the children of Israel after their orgy at the foot of Mount Sinai in which they

made the molten calf to worship. Here in verse 15 God is explaining that it does not matter what you and I may want. It doesn't matter what you and I may desire. It is God who decides when and to whom He will have mercy, when and to whom He will give compassion.

Jesus Christ himself shows the sovereignty of the Father when he stated in John 6:44:

**John 6:44.** *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (NKJV)*

In Romans 9:16 it says:

**Romans 9:16.** *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (NKJV)*

With that let's turn to Matthew 26:36-42. We are all very, very familiar with the story flow here. Christ and the eleven are in the garden, having moments ago taken part of the New Testament symbols of the Passover.

**Matthew 26:36.** *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there."  
37) And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. (NKJV)*

It's important for us to understand here that Christ was in very deep distress. You see, Christ was as human as you and I are.

*38) Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." (NKJV)*

Here we find what one would refer to today as depression. Christ stated that his soul was exceedingly sorrowful. "Soul" here is Strong's number 5590 transliterated as "psuche" and it means *breath of life*.

*39) He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

*40) Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?"*

*41) Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

*42) Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (NKJV)*

Jesus Christ was in deep distress, yet he prayed to his Father that the trial that he was about to face would pass away. Christ also understood that it was up to the will of the

Father. He knew that the Father would show mercy to anyone that the Father chose and that the Father would show compassion to whom the Father wills. Christ was willing to have the Father's will be done as he, Christ, knew that his distress would be relieved to his Father's purpose. Mercy and compassion are totally up to God. The bottom line is that it's His decision to His purpose.

To this point in this message we have seen compassion expressed by Christ in a number of different examples. We have seen the use of compassion by the God of the Old Testament. We have come to understand that the Father is sovereign when it comes to deciding who will and who will not receive His compassion. For the remainder of today's message I want each of us to see that we, as Christians, should be applying these attributes of compassion in each of our lives. As a refresher, what again is our working definition of compassion? It is *suffering with and for another, desiring to relieve another's distress*. Turn please to Zechariah 7:9.

***Zechariah 7:9.*** "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother.'" (NKJV)

Of course, this means by extension to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hold that thought and turn to Colossians 3:11-17 from the New International Version.

***Colossians 3:11.*** Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

13) Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

14) And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (NIV)

I find it interesting that the first virtue that we're to put on, that we're to practice, that we're to apply is love above all. Love is the component, if you will, that drives compassion.

15) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

17) And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)

I believe that each item listed in verses 12 through 17 is tied directly to compassion, because a compassionate Jesus Christ would have lived a life which is, and as we read in verse 12 loving, first as noted in verse 14, then kind, having humility, showing gentleness and being patient. In addition, and as we found in verse 13, a

compassionate Christian would most likely be bearing towards others, forgiving towards others. A compassionate Christian would live in concordance with verses 14 through 17; love, peace, the word of Christ dwelling with us, doing whatever we do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Christ.

Turn please to 1 Peter 3:8-9.

**1 Peter 3:8.** *Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9) not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. (NKJV)*

You know, these two verses speak volumes on compassion.

At this point I would like to review a couple of illustrations of compassion to help cement the fact that we are to be compassionate, if it hasn't sunk in yet.

The first story is found in the three gospels; in Matthew 22:34-40 or Mark 12:28-34 also in Luke 10:25-37, which we will use for our purpose.

**Luke 10:25.** *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26) He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27) So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" 28) And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." 29) But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30) Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31) Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32) Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33) But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34) So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35) On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36) So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"*

37) *And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (NKJV)*

Here we find a wonderful illustration for each of us on this particular application of compassion. It's practical in that if we had the opportunity, and if we had the means to show compassion as this Samaritan, then by all sense of the word we too should express the mercy and the compassion.

A second illustration is taken from the Old Testament. Turn back to the beginning if you will to Genesis 18:1-5 from the New Living Translation. We are all familiar with what we are about to read, but I want us to read through this and as we read through it, think of the compassion in this particular story.

**Genesis 18:1.** *The Lord appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near an oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent*

*2) he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them, bowing low to the ground. (NLT)*

Now, at this point we don't know how, but Abraham must have known who these three men were. Why else would he have bowed very low to the ground, but in respect for at least one, if not all three of these men?

*3) "My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while.*

*4) Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet.*

*5) Let me prepare some food to refresh. Please stay a while you before continuing on your journey." "All right," they said. "Do as you have said." (NLT)*

The King James Version reads, "and I will fetch a morsel of bread and comfort ye your hearts." The New King James Version reads "to refresh your hearts."

We ask a question at this point. Why do you think Abraham wanted to feed these three? Based on the understanding of the context of who these three were they certainly wouldn't be hungry. Possibly they were perspiring. After all, it was noon nearing the heat of the day, possibly being winded due to the walk. I'm sure they had dirt and dust on their sandals. So, Abraham had compassion, if you will, and wanted to relieve their distress, whether that distress simply was the dust and the dirt of the sandals.

The Hebrew word for "comfort" found here in verse 5 of the King James Version is Strong's number 5582 transliterated as "kaduw" and it means *to support, to strengthen*. You see, food doesn't just fill up people. It's also an emotional support to any individual, just as any act of compassion is an emotional support to people, to those who are on the receiving end of a desire to relieve another's distress. You have all heard the phrase comfort food. It's because food consumed while under distress does what? It

strengthens, it comforts, it upholds, it establishes. Abraham's desire to feed these three travelers was a compassionate act to strengthen each of them.

This reminds me of an act of compassion that Shelley and I were recipients of many, many years ago, although at the time I did not realize it or view it as an act of compassion. I do now. Just a few years after we were married I was in between employment. One evening there was a knock at the door. I went down to open the door and there was no one around, but there was a large basket of groceries placed on our porch. The food itself was comforting. As I look back on it now, the act of compassion on the part of a particular family within the body of Christ was also comforting knowing that they had a part in helping to relieve our distress. This act of kindness, this act of compassion on the part of this family is a perfect segway into the final aspects of today's message.

As we begin to conclude today's message, turn please to Philippians 2:1-4 from the New International Version.

***Philippians 2:1.*** *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,*

*2) then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

*3) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

*4) Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (NIV)*

I am not going to name names, but it's refreshing to come to services every Sabbath and a particular individual greets many of us by taking interest in us. Keeping these four verses in mind which we just read let's turn again to Colossians 3:12. Earlier we read verses 11 through 17. This time we will begin in verse 12 and read through verse 17 and then we'll conclude with verses 23 and 24 again from the New International Version.

***Colossians 3:12.*** *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion ... (NIV)*

Note it's listed first.

*12b) ... kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

*13) Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

*14) And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*15) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

*17) And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

*23) Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,*

*24) since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (NIV)*

Remember the examples of compassion we touched on here today. Remember the illustrations brought out today. Remember whatever act of compassion we are involved in, work at it with all our heart remembering that the one we are serving is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Christ who suffered and died for each of us, so we too, like little Toby Shelley, will have the opportunity of eternal life in the God family.

In part 2 of this topic on compassion we will review what was covered here today and we will also look at four Biblically-based ways we can build active compassion in our Christian calling.