

Thoughts on  
**COMPASSION**



# COMPASSION

Some time ago the Lord began to bring the concept of having a passion for souls to my attention. While I understand that the world has tried to warp our view of the word “passion,” is it still correct to use that particular word when speaking about souls? Should we use something softer, like *love* or even *concern*? Is it ok to just love souls, or should we feel something stronger like passion? My sister and I had many conversations regarding this and it really began to work on our minds and souls.

In English we sometimes sing the song “A Passion for Souls”. Look at those words:

**Give me a passion for souls, dear Lord,  
A passion to save the lost;  
O that Thy love were by all adored,  
And welcomed at any cost.**

**Refrain:**

*Jesus, I long, I long to be winning  
Men who are lost, and constantly  
sinning;*

*O may this hour be one of beginning  
The story of pardon to tell.*

**2 Though there are dangers untold and stern  
Confronting me in the way,  
Willingly still would I go, nor turn,  
But trust Thee for grace each day. (Refrain)**

**3 How shall this passion for souls be mine?  
Lord, make Thou the answer clear;  
Help me to throw out the old Life-Line  
To those who are struggling near. (Refrain)**

Around the same time as we were thinking these things through, we heard several Bible studies about *compassion*. It seemed like everywhere we turned the Lord was bringing the concept of compassion to our attention.

Often, when something like this happens I will sit down and begin to study things through for myself. These thoughts are the result of such a study.

### **What is compassion?**

The word passion is derived from the Latin root “pati” which means “suffer”. The word “com” in Portuguese (which is one of the Latin-based languages) means “with”. So it is easy to see that compassion means to suffer with. Someone else’s heartbreak becomes your own heartbreak. Another person’s suffering becomes your own. It is a sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Based on this definition, it seems obvious that we SHOULD feel passion for souls. We must not just love souls, we must treat them with passion – a desire to alleviate their suffering!!

What are some synonyms for compassion? Empathy, sympathy, tenderness, kindness, mercy, grace, commiseration and softheartedness. Antonyms include attitudes such as merciless, indifference, ill will and harshness.

So, with this background, I began to search out the word compassion in Scripture.

### **The concept of first mention**

Many times the first time a doctrine or word is mentioned in Scripture is especially significant. Knowing this, I paid close attention to the first use of the word compassion in the English Bible.

Exodus 2:6 – *“And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And*

*she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."*

This verse speaks of Pharaoh's daughter – no doubt an unsaved woman. Is it not an indictment on the church and Christianity as a whole that often the world has more compassion (remember the synonyms) than a judgmental, harsh child of God? No doubt the attitude of compassion, if it were displayed more prominently, would be salt and light to this world in which we live.

### **what moves you ?**

Another thing I found as I researched Scripture verses about compassion was the phrase **moved with compassion**. At least five times in Scripture we find this phrase – four times Jesus was moved with compassion as He saw people. That made me think. What moves me? What makes me spring into action? Do I become moved when I see people hurting, or do I judge, figuring that they must have had done something to deserve their suffering and they are just reaping what they have sown? If I believe that I have compassion, how does it move me? What does it move me to do? What moves you?

**Matthew 9:36-38** - *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

**Matthew 14:14** - *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with*

*compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.*

**Mark 1:41** - And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

**Mark 6:34** - And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

These verses show what Jesus was moved to do because of the compassion that He felt.

Matthew 9:36 is the first mention of the phrase *moved with compassion*. What does Jesus tell His disciples in the following two verses? The harvest is great, so PRAY that more laborers will be sent to harvest lost souls! This challenge came from a heart of compassion! We, too, must have a passion for lost souls!

In Matthew 14:14 and Mark 1:41 we see that He healed their sick. Those of us who know what it is to be sick or have a loved one suffering from an incurable sickness know what a relief this must have been for that multitude of people.

Should we not then show compassion on the souls of mankind who are afflicted with the worst kind of sickness – the leprosy of sin? The Scriptures go so far as to say they are “dead in their trespasses and sins.” We must, like our Lord, be moved with compassion on these souls and introduce them to the Great Physician.

In Mark 6:34 we see that Jesus began to teach the people many things. First he saw them, then was moved with compassion and began to teach many things. Does compassion move us to see specific needs in those around us and do

something to meet them? Are we prepared to teach others, to guide them as a shepherd would?

**Mark 8:1, 2** - *In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:*

Here we see that Jesus had compassion because of the physical needs of those around Him. When others' suffering really becomes our own, we will notice their needs, and we will be moved to do something about it, just like our Lord was.

**Luke 7:13** - *And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. Not only did our Master show compassion because of the physical needs He saw in others, He had compassion on this lady because of her emotional distress. What sensitivity!!*

When we see others in tears, does that affect us? Are we capable of sharing in that suffering? Or have we become so hard and cold that we automatically assume that the person must have done something to deserve a punishment?

Do we have biblical compassion on those around us? Are we like Jesus?

### **WHO else SHOWED COMPASSION ?**

We will consider how Jesus showed compassion in another section, but besides our Great Example, who else in the Scriptures are said to have shown compassion?

**Matthew 18:27** - *Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*

Here we see the phrase *moved with compassion* appear again. What was he moved to do? Forgive. Do we have enough compassion on those around us that it moves us to forgive even the most egregious offenses? That man had a debt so large that there was no human way he could have paid it. Ten thousand talents is equivalent to SIXTY MILLION DAYS OF WORK!! It would take one man, working 365 days a year over 164,000 years to pay that debt. Totally impossible!! What a hopeless cause he was. But the lord of that servant had compassion and was moved to forgive the entire debt. He didn't ask for twenty years' work or even ten.

Is there anyone in your life that has done so much wrong to you that you feel as if there is NO WAY to forgive them? Is the hurt too large, too deep? Interestingly enough, the servant did not ask to have his debt forgiven – he asked for more time to try to get the money together. (I cannot help but ask myself how he managed to get in so much debt to begin with – a man with one talent was considered rich, and yet he had borrowed ten thousand!!) True biblical compassion will move us to forgive the unforgiveable.

**Luke 10:33** - *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,*

The Good Samaritan also showed compassion. Lamentations 3:51a states “*Mine eye affecteth mine heart...*” and that is what happened to the Samaritan. He saw a man that had been beaten, robbed and left for dead. And what he saw affected his heart. It also moved him to act! He stopped, went to him, took care of his wounds,

put him on his beast and took him to the inn where he continued to take care of him, physically and financially. His compassion cost him time, comfort, resources and effort.

It is important to realize that the Good Samaritan only felt compassion because he *saw*. Too often we are too busy to stop and look at those around us – REALLY look. What are their hurts? What are their needs? What are their circumstances today? What can I do to help?

Do your eyes affect your heart? Do you feel compassion because of what you see? Do you take time to really look?

**Luke15:20** - *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

The prodigal's father showed compassion on his wayward son. He not only saw his son arriving – he saw him from afar. Why? Because he was looking, actively searching for his son to return. Who are we looking for to come back to the Lord?

Once again, we see someone being moved by the attitude of compassion. He ran to his son – he didn't sit on his porch with a holier-than-thou attitude of "I told you so". He ran to that young man that had so rudely left home, squandered his inheritance and now stunk like a pig sty. How did he treat his son? Compassion, feeling the son's sufferings as though they were his own, led that precious father to hug and kiss his dirty, stinky son.

Have you ever done something like that because you were moved by compassion? Are you watching for an opportunity to be compassionate?



**thoughts from a few other mentions of  
compassion**

**Psalm 78:38** - *But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.*

**Psalm 86:15** - *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*

**Psalm 111:4** - *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.*

**Psalm 145:8** - *The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

What a blessing to know that our God is FULL of compassion. Am I?

**Lamentations 3:22** - *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

If it weren't for the Lord's compassion, we certainly would be consumed, doomed! Thank the Lord for his everlasting, unfailing compassion in your life!

**Jude vs 22** - *And of some have compassion, making a difference:*

This is the last mention of compassion in the Bible. If we can follow our Lord's lead and show compassion on those around us, we will make a difference in their lives.

**Mark 9:22b** - *...if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*

I left this verse for last. The context of this verse is a father who was asking help for his son who was possessed with a foul spirit. The son was thrown in fire and water, trying to destroy his life. The father was

desperate for help and knew that if Jesus would just feel his suffering (have compassion) that He would be moved to help the young boy. The following verses show that Jesus did, in fact, heal the man's son. And while this verse does not speak of one who showed compassion, I believe it is the heart cry of many in this world today. Do we see the lost sinking in sin? Do we see them on the precipice of hell? How can we not cry, "Give me a passion for souls, dear Lord"?

Believer, if you can do anything, please have compassion on the lost and help them.