

# *The Character of an Elder - Becoming The Heart Of Jesus*

## COMPASSION

Reading – I Pet. 1 5:1-11

God, through Jesus, the apostles and then the elders planned to perfect, affirm, strengthen and establish us in Him.

When my world is falling apart, when I have more crises that I can cope with, when my family is in serious trouble, who would have the spiritual maturity, the Christ-like personality, the compassionate disposition – who would be the example to encourage us?

In our hurting world the only eyes, ears, hands and feet Jesus has are ours. The only heart of compassion that Jesus has is ours. We are His instruments for doing good. If we do not see, hear and respond to the hurting of our world, who will?

We need to find those who will:

*Shepherd us  
Guide us  
Teach us  
Protect us  
Disciple us  
And lead us to heaven*

*We need those who understand these scriptures:*

- **Romans 6.13** says, *Offer yourselves as instruments of righteousness.*
- **Ephesians 2.10** reads, *For we are God's workmanship, created in Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*
- **Galatians 6.1**, *Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
- **In Romans 12.1** Paul urges us to become *living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.*

Becoming the instruments of righteousness of Jesus is our mission. **Romans 8.29** tells us without any doubt that as children of God, *we are predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son*

Now if we are going to have the heart of Jesus, we must know what **compassion** is... the dictionary says the following about compassion:

• **First**, It tells us that compassion comes from two Latin words meaning literally, *to bear with*.

• **Secondly**, It says, compassion is a sympathetic consciousness of another's distress, coupled with an action to alleviate that distress.

***So, compassion is an awareness, a consciousness of the distress of another.***

We are not to live with our heads in the sand or our noses in the air. We are to be like Jesus, open our eyes and ears, notice what is going on around us.

**Thirdly, compassion has a desire to alleviate the distress others are suffering.**

Compassion means that we are touched by the problems of others. We must be soft-hearted, tender hearted, sympathetic people.

**Fourthly, compassion goes to work in order to fulfill the distress of others.**

Compassion is active, not just passive pity ( which means to feel pain or grief for, to have sympathy).

**Compassion is not compassion until it goes to work... Until it responds.**

Seeing the needs of others and feeling sorrow for them is *pity.and Sympathy*.

**Pity and sympathy says:**

- *I am deeply touched by your distress.*
- *I understand your feeling.*
- *I share your hurt.*

**But compassion is doing something that will help:**

- **Bear their burden,**
- **Lighten their load,**
- **Heal their hurt,**
- **Restore their loss.**

Jesus said, *come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, bear your burdens, carry your loads, lift you up.* Jesus has a plan of action. Indeed, as the prophet predicted;

- *He bore our griefs,*
- *Carried our sorrows,*
- *He was wounded for our transgressions,*
- *Bruised for our iniquities,*

• *He bore the sin of many and made intercession for us, the transgressor.*

This is **compassion**.

**Caring for those who cannot care for themselves has always been a concern of God. In the Old Testament, we see God's deep love and concern for:**

- The widow,
- The orphan,
- The sojourner
- And the poor.

The law of Moses was filled with ways to care for those caught in the trap of unfortunate circumstances... Including sin.

- Corners of the fields were left for the poor gleaners.
- The cities of refuge were provided for the legally entrapped.

**Not only was compassion an Old Testament principle, it is also a New Command.**

- **Jesus** said in **Matt:19:20**, *love you neighbors as your self.*
- **Paul** says, in **Gal 6:10** *as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially toward those of the household of faith.*
- **Romans 12:13-15** commands that we *share with those in need, that we practice hospitality, that we weep with those who weep.*
- **James 1:27** tells us that *pure religion, religion that pleases God is caring for the fatherless, the widows in their afflictions.*

**The early church practiced compassion... Listen to these scriptures:**

*In Acts 4:32-35* *The believers had everything in common, selling their possession and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

• *All believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possession was his own, but they shared everything. There were no needy among them, for those who owned lands and houses sold them and brought the money to be distributed to those in need.*

**We talk about restoring New Testament Christianity, we haven't completed the job have we?**

**Church**, if God is compassionate, and He is... If Jesus was compassionate and He was, then our conforming to His image necessarily **infers that we become a people and persons of compassion... Right?**

*Now, let's examine Jesus' teaching on our subject... Jesus on compassion.*  
**Turn to Matthew 25.31-46 and let's read together.**

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you? He will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.*

**What can we learn about compassion from this Jesus narrative?**

**First and foremost, where we spend eternity depends upon how we treat others.**

Judgment here was passed out here, based on whether or not compassion was extended. Many of us are counting on church attendance to get us through the pearly gates. **No**, Jesus said, *how you treat people is of utmost importance in this religion called Christianity.* Christianity is seeing and serving the Jesus in others. Church attendance without compassion is not the way of Christ.

**Secondly, compassion is a personal response to another's need**

Do you see it, JESUS SAID

- *I was hungry,*
- *I was thirsty,*
- *I was a stranger,*
- *I was naked,*
- *I was sick,*
- *I was in prison;*

*And you cared enough to feed me, give me drink, took me in, cloth me, you looked after me*

*and visited me.*

**I was, you did... I had a need, you personally compassioned me. Here it is audience,**

- If God rules my life, I will be compassionate.
- And I will not resist His providentially leading me to those in my world that need my help... Either spiritually or physically.

**Number three, serving Jesus is accomplished by serving others.**

*As often as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me.* This is powerful stuff.

- How we feel about a brother is how we feel about God.
- How we talk about a sister is how we talk about God.
- How we treat one another is how we treat God.

When will we realize that God comes to us in others. When will we understand that He asks us to serve Him by serving others? In **Hebrews 13:1-2** the writer says, *some have entertained angels by serving others and were not even aware of it. No I can't explain this verse, I must just accept it.* If the Bible says some can and have entertained angels by being compassionate, **I will believe it...** That's all. You see angels don't always come with clean clothes, clean faces and smelling good.

**Lets read another Jesus narrative on compassion... Turn to Luke 10.25-37.**

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" He replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbor as yourself." "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **But a Samaritan**, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." **Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."***

**Again, what can we learn here about compassion?**

***Compassion does not look at the victim.***

This was the jest of the entire story, *who is my neighbor*. The answer is, *those in need*. Sometime we try to qualify the victim... Trying to determine if they deserve our help. It's interesting to note here that the Good Samaritan never ask. Yes, yes, there are times that, *if we have a Jesus heart of compassion*, we will be taken advantage of.

- We will help some who don't deserve our help.
- Some are panhandlers.

**But that's OK... That's OK.** Jesus was this kind of person. in **Luke 17:11** He helped ten lepers and only one deserved it. He helped us all here today, *while we were yet sinners, aliens, ungodly, unlovable and undeserving Christ died for us*. Who would be so bold to say today, ***I deserve Jesus 'sacrificial death on the cross'***?

We must be like Jesus. He was always helping, befriending, serving the most *undeserving* people:

- The woman at the well,
- The lepers,
- The lady caught in adultery,
- The tax collectors,
- The devil possessed
- Roman soldiers around the cross.
- Even a thief on a cross.

**Why is that?...** Because *genuine compassion does not see the victim, but does see the Jesus in the victim*.

**Secondly, religion that does not see Jesus in others is hypocrisy.**

The priest and Levite were religious folk, well meaning, good people, but they were more interested in religion than in people. Church, when religion is more interested in religion than in people it is ugly religion. Jesus addresses this in **Matthew 23.23** when He said, *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former*. As we read this entire chapter, we find that Jesus is not condemning them for keeping the commandments, **but for their insensitivity to people**... Their insensitivity to the weightier matters. In **Mark 2.27** Jesus said, *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*.

**Church, the most important thing in our religion is people... People... People.** The priest and the Levi saw a blood body on the side of the road, **the Good Samaritan saw Jesus... That's compassion.**

**Thirdly, in this narrative, we understand that compassion demands a price.**

Benevolence will cost us our time, talent and treasure. How many of us would have pulled

out our Jerusalem Visa card and told the motel clerk, *whatever he needs put it on here*. The Good Samaritan took quite a risk... *He became vulnerable*.

The Greek for the two silver coins is denarii or two day's wages. The Samaritan gave the inn keeper two day's salary and told him, *if more is needed put it on my account*.

When was the last time I practiced *pure religion* and gave two days wages to someone in need? **Church, compassion is not a one time event, it is an attitude.**

**Can I do one more? Turn to John 13:1-5 and 14 let's read .**

*It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him... **Now verse 14**, Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.*

What do we see here about compassion?

***Becoming a people of compassion means our life will be interrupted.***

Some have suggested that perhaps this was the real problem with the Priest and the Levi. The needs of people must be met, and their need will not always come at a time convenient to us. I believe that night, the last thing that the human Jesus wanted to do was wash feet. He was about to die and He knew it. **He was about to accomplish what He and the Father had:**

- **Worked on,**
- **Planned for,**
- **Talked about,**
- **And promised for over 3000 years.**

**His sacrificial death for the sins of the world.** But for a few minutes the world stood still for Jesus to wash feet... For Him to serve others. **That, folks, is compassion.** We must become a people and person who say, God use me and then be willing to interrupt our lives caring for the needs of others.

***Compassion is humility.***

In less than twenty-four hours He would be hanging on a cross for the sins of the world, wasn't that humbling enough? But something was needed that night in the upper room, feet needed washing.

What these men were too proud to do for themselves, Jesus did for them. Why didn't they wash His feet?... Too proud. Compassion, serving the Jesus in others means we must let go of our pride, pick up the towel and wash feet. Refusing to wash feet, refusing to humbly serve others is not conforming to the image of Jesus. Paul challenges us in **Phillipians 2:1-7**

to have the heart, the mind, the attitude of Jesus and become a servant... Are we willing?

**Fourthly, compassion is found in small things.**

I'm going to die for their sins, isn't that enough, must wash I their feet also?

Jesus is teaching us faithfulness in small things.

**Compassion is best seen in small acts of caring:**

- Washing feet,
- The widows mite.
- A cup of cold water in His name,
- A sandwich at McDonalds,
- A few cans of formula,
- A lift down the highway,
- Ten gallons of gas,
- A night's sleep in a real bed,
- A smile, an encouraging word,

**Sometimes compassion is just saying, I forgive you.**

Luke tells us in Acts 10:34, that Jesus went about doing good. This is our calling, becoming like Him. I liked what was said in one of our past lessons, about no one has seen God...

Indeed they haven't except to the extent that they see God in us. As the world looks at the

church, they don't see sound doctrine, they don't know the difference between sound doctrine and loose doctrine. **What they do see is our good works of compassion. Like a magnet, compassion draws the world to Jesus, not to us, but to Jesus.**

Are we drawing others to Jesus? Do we need elders that can draw us and others to Jesus?

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