

A Heart of Compassion

Colossians 3:12

A Heart of Compassion

What is a heart of compassion?

We now come to five characteristics in which the believer must be clothed in order to comply with the *imperative*: **put on or cause yourself to be clothed**. As we are going to see, and this is very important, all five of these are directly related to Spiritual Love which is the New Commandment given by the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, just prior to His departure from the earth. So, if any of these do not characterize you, then do not try to claim that you love as Jesus Christ loved. However, as we will see, we have to be sure we understand what these virtues are in divine perspective, not human viewpoint.

Colossians 3:12 Put on, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

A heart of compassion while this sounds so nice in the English it does not sound so appealing in the Greek. The word translated heart, here is actually **bowels** and even then, it is in the singular; **Put on bowel of compassion**. Now, many translations of the Bible translate this either **bowels** or **heart**. In the Greek language many portions of the anatomy also double for some area of the soul. And this word translated **bowels** is also used for emotions or inner feelings of the soul. We do the same thing today: ‘have a heart,’ ‘put your backbone into it,’ ‘you have to have guts to do this,’ etc.

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This word ‘bowels or heart’ is followed by the noun meaning compassion, or pity. It is so important to be careful to biblically understand this word to guard against sloppy application of the word. This noun is not nearly as strong as the noun translated mercy, so we will stay away from translating it **mercy** and concentrate on the word **compassion**.

As one Lexicon states “this word is the pity or compassion which one shows for the sufferings of others.” Here is our first clue to the application of this word in our lives. To give you some idea of the difficulty in translating these words, they appear together in:

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

Here the King James **bowels and mercies**. What in the world is **bowels and mercies**? Here **bowels** is correctly understood as affections.

Next thing we want to notice about these two words is how they are related to each other. The bowels or heart refers to the inner effect of Spiritual Love from the Holy Spirit. Spiritual Love is from the Holy Spirit. And Spiritual Love is a force and as a force has impact or effects. Here we learn that the first impact of Spiritual Love is inside of the believer himself/herself. Then, the Holy Spirit adds the word for compassion. This refers to the outward impact of Spiritual Love.

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So first, we have faith in the Holy Spirit who in turn pours His fruit of Spiritual Love into our souls, where it's first impact is on us—affecting our hearts. This causes an outward expression of Spiritual Love called *compassion toward those in need*.

Flow of the entire passage:

1. You have died with Christ. Colossians 2:20
2. You then were raised up with Christ. Colossians 3:1
3. Christ should be your life. Colossians 3:4
4. You put off the old self (as an unbeliever). Colossians 3:8-9
5. You now put on the new self — who you are in Christ. Colossians 3:10
6. Since Christ is all and in all. Colossians 3:11
which means He should be all to you; the word and is what is to be emphasized to us;
7. Since you are elect, holy and beloved. Colossians 3:12
emphasis on adverb AS or therefore. **Since you are elect, holy and beloved...put on**
8. Put on a heart of Compassion. Colossians 3:12
9. Live like one to whom Christ has indeed become All to you.
10. Love like Jesus Christ loves since He is all to you!

How are we to 'put on' or 'allow ourselves to be clothed' with heart of Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience? How are we

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to be like Christ? How are we to love like Christ? The same way Jesus Christ loved—by the power of Holy Spirit.

Summary:

1. When you believed in Jesus Christ as Savior some 34 things happened to you by the grace of God. Imputation of Divine Righteousness (+R) and resultant Justification and Eternal Life. We were saved eternally by grace through faith.
2. God the Father then supplies everyone who believes with the indwelling Holy Spirit.
3. Then God made it a grace way to be filling of the Holy Spirit, by grace through faith – by faith in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit then empowers you.
4. When we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, a multitude of things start happening in us, a desire for the Word of God, and receiving the fruit of the Holy Spirit which includes Spiritual Love.
5. The force of Spiritual Love makes an impact first inside the soul of the believer (affecting the heart) then the force of Spiritual Love has overt impact in our lives – heart of Compassion toward those in need.
6. One of the first characteristics of Spiritual Love is to Observe the Need in the object of that love. So, Spiritual Love observes the need of another believer who is suffering in some way.
7. And then Spiritual Love reaches out in Compassion toward that believer.

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Heart of Compassion To express the biblical understanding of a heart of compassion we will look at it from the standpoint of Spiritual Love and by comparing the English word with other words.

1. Compassion is from the impact of Spiritual Love which causes the believer to enter into the distresses, the sufferings, the hurts of another. By nature, some people have little or no compassion towards the hurts of another. But Spiritual Love overcomes this natural 'insensitivity.' While others are naturally compassionate toward all people who are suffering. But Spiritual Love does two things here: First, Spiritual Love directs the impulse of compassion to help those who are in need of spiritual compassionate relief. Secondly, Spiritual Love makes the heart of Compassion acceptable to God! An unbeliever or a carnal believer may be compassionate and is driven by compassion to render aid to that person, but only Spiritual Love makes this compassion pleasing to God and acceptable to God. Remember, anything done out of the filling of the Holy Spirit is not acceptable to God as divine good.
2. Compassion compared to sympathy: You may sympathize with someone's suffering without being motivated to in some way serve them to alleviate their sufferings, their hurts. The same may be said of pity.
3. But when there is compassion from the Holy Spirit, in Spiritual Love, by the nature of Spiritual Love we think on how we can help to relieve them of their sufferings and hurts and wants. It is the nature of Spiritual Love to see a need and then seek out how best to meet that need in their lives.

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4. Compassion compared to commiseration: (this one is important in guarding against turning ‘heart of compassion’ into sloppy actions which have no norm or standard or righteousness in it). “Compassion may be aroused by any sort of suffering but particularly those which are attributable to our misfortunes while commiseration is awakened by sufferings arising from our faults” (English Synonymes by Crabb).

God is said to have compassion:

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

The Greek word here translated ‘mercies’ is our word, where in Col. 3:12 it is translated compassion. What is interesting here is the Greek word translated comfort refers to exhortation, or encouragement therefore giving comfort. “All scripture is actually an exhortation, admonition or encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in the faith” (The Complete WordStudy Dictionary). But, we must pay close attention to the context of 2 Cor 1:3

2 Corinthians 1:2. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:3. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

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2 Corinthians 1:4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Please understand that the phrase **mercies of God** refers to His offer of eternal life Salvation and spiritual recovery from sin to the believer: both by faith. There is no mercy or compassion to those who reject so great a salvation or to the believer who refuses to repent and go back to living by faith. Their encouragement comes in the form of Divine Discipline,

The same is true of Paul's exhortation in

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*

Again, the mercies of God refer to all His grace provisions.

People, it is so important to understand the Heart of Compassion before God. A rather sobering passage on this very subject is found in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 13:14 "I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together," declares the LORD. "I will not show pity nor be

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**sorry nor have compassion so as not to
destroy them.”**

Here we have three words in the domain of our study. **The Lord declares I will not show pity** this Hebrew word means to have pity and demonstrate that pity by sparing some form of judgment. If there is no pity – there comes ruthless judgment. This Hebrew word for pity, may manifest itself by restraint, withholding of judgment.

next: **nor be sorry** where does the translation *be sorry* come? This word is used in reference to the subject of the verb; he is not to be worried about himself. *do not feel sorry for yourself that you have to do this thing, do not pity yourself.* Parents use to say: this hurts me more than it does you. Yea, but not in the same place!! The point here is that God is going to administer harsh judgement against His people and they are so deserving that it does not cause God any concern about what He is about to do to them. People, you never want to get so far away from God that He has no problem with His own Love in what He is about to do to you.

Then **nor have compassion** This Hebrew word means to have compassion or to have mercy—when this is of the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Love it is accompanied with the desire to relieve the suffering. But, please note that the Holy Spirit does not always give us *a heart of compassion.* Here is God Himself while administering Divine Discipline on His own people has no compassion on them, and this is God, Himself. For your information, so that you will always be a recipient of God’s compassion, Scripture points out two categories of people God has sovereignly chosen to have compassion on:

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1. Those who fear Him: **Psa. 103:13 Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.** where the word fear means maximum respect and trust in Him.
2. Those who acknowledge their sinful pattern of life and turn away from them and turn to the Lord by faith **Prov. 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.** The first person here, is in denial of his sinful life, while the second acknowledges that he has been living in sin, against the way God would have him live and repents and turns to walking by faith. God will show compassion on that person. This means that while you might still receive Divine Discipline it will not be nearly as severe as it would have been.

So, here in Jeremiah 13:14, God has no pity, and is not sorry and has no compassion. So, in our spiritual life we desire a heart of compassion. Do not turn this into sloppy compassion.

A perfect example of 'heart of Compassion' is seen in the study of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:30 Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.

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Luke 10:31 “And by chance (Often Divine Providence will put you in this circumstance where compassion is needed) a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Insensitive to the sufferings of others, especially if there is no religious reward in stopping to help. Religious people will often help if they are seen by others or if it somehow exalts them. Spiritual Love sees the need and meets that need regardless of who is looking or not looking.

Luke 10:32 “Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

One issue that will often block the heart of compassion is ‘not wanting to get involved.’ The Levites were responsible to preserve the law of Jehovah in all its integrity and purity, to see that its requirements duly complied with.’ Obviously, this was not honored with this poor beaten man. But this Levite, like so many Christians saw the man beaten, saw he was in need of help, but did not want to get involved. Perhaps too busy to take the time to render the impulse of compassion. But Spiritual Love sees the need and sacrifices self for the benefit of another.

Luke 10:33 But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,

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But a Samaritan, The NASV leaves out the very important ‘*indefinite pronoun*’ and like the King James should read **and a certain Samaritan.** The term ‘*indefinite pronoun*’ is misleading, for this *pronoun* actually refers to a most definite person or object, which for various reasons is not named but simply referred to as ‘a certain’ etc.

Samaritan this is one who is repulsed by the Jews. As we will see this is a perfect picture of Jesus Christ Himself who was rejected by the Jews, but who had compassion on all mankind. Stripped of worth and naked of righteousness and so Jesus Christ with Spiritual Love, heart of compassion, comes to the aid of mankind. **But a certain Samaritan** is a picture of Jesus Christ.

who was on a journey, OK, the priest and the Levite were simply going down the road. But, this Samaritan is on a journey. He is going somewhere on purpose with the design of accomplishing an objective.

came upon him; and when he saw him, Remember Spiritual Love sees a need.

he felt compassion, you might be surprised at this word translated **compassion.** It is a verb – *Present Passive Indicative* of the verb meaning *bowels* or *intestines* or *even the nervous system.* And like our word in Col. 3:12 is often translated *heart* but here, in most translations, is translated compassion. The *passive voice* tells us this is what Spiritual Love will do. It will cause a heart of compassion to dominate your thinking.

Next, we have the actions of ‘heart of compassion’ or the impact of Spiritual Love in life.

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Luke 10:34 and came to him (Jesus Christ comes to us from heaven) and bandaged up his wounds, (takes away our sins) pouring oil and wine on *them*; (heals) and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

Luke 10:35 “On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper (picture of the Holy Spirit) and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return (2nd Advent) I will repay you.’

Luke 10:36 “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ *hands*?”

Luke 10:37 And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

Question: Does everyone deserve Compassion?

The answer to this question depends on how you define ‘compassion.’ If we understand compassion as flowing from Spiritual Love which sees a need and then meets that need, then no, there are multitude of cases where compassion is not from the Holy Spirit. But if we understand

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compassion as sympathy or simply pity, then perhaps yes for our souls will reach out in sympathy.

The Word of God beckons us not to have pity on someone who dies in capital punishment.

Deuteronomy 19:13 “You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you. (context—capital punishment)

We are not to have compassion when Righteousness is violated. This chapter, (Deuteronomy 19) is concerned with ‘Cities of Refuge.’ Now I don’t know if you know it or not, but these are not a places of safe refuge for the murderer or the one who willingly commits a crime.

Deuteronomy 19:1-13:

Deuteronomy 19:1 “When the LORD your God cuts off the nations, whose land the LORD your God gives you, and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and in their houses,

Deuteronomy 19:2 You shall set aside three cities for yourself in the midst of your land, which the LORD your God gives you to possess.

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Deuteronomy 19:3 “You shall prepare the roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there.

Deuteronomy 19:4 “Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously—

Deuteronomy 19:5 as when *a man* goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron *head* slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live;

Deuteronomy 19:6 otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger, and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously.

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Deuteronomy 19:7 “Therefore, I command you, saying, ‘You shall set aside three cities for yourself.’

Deuteronomy 19:8 “If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers—

Deuteronomy 19:9 if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always—then you shall add three more cities for yourself, besides these three.

Deuteronomy 19:10 “So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and blood guiltiness be on you.

Deuteronomy 19:11 “But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities,

Deuteronomy 19:12 then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver

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him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

Deuteronomy 19:13 “You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.

Thine eye shall not pity him corrected translation. This is said to the elders, judges, and civil magistrates of the city to which he belonged, who took cognizance of his case; these were to show him no compassion, no pity, no favoritism on account of his being a citizen, a neighbor, a relation or friend, or a rich man, or on any account whatever, but without favor or compassion were to judge him and put him to death as a murderer.

Numbers 35:21 or if he struck him down with his hand in enmity, and as a result he died, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death, he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

and then a few verses down states the reason for capital punishment:

Num. 35:33 ‘So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood (murder) pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the

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land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.

Capital punishment is not about the murderer but about the nation, about the moral, spiritual condition of the nation, what is being taught to the young people.

This is where the tenderness of the flesh will seek to overrule the leading of the Holy Spirit as to compassion in Righteousness.

So that we have words to communicate concepts, let's say that **compassion** is where you are moved to reach out and help the person as one who is poor, and pity is where you may feel sorry for that person but are not led to reach out and help remove the suffering. In this understanding, we can have pity for all those who will be in the lake of fire, but not compassion.

God who is called the God of mercies has compassion on all unbelievers to the point He sent His own son to die for them.

But once a person rejects Jesus Christ as Savior and dies, they come under the righteous judgment of God, not His mercy or compassion.

We should have compassion toward someone who understands Biblical truth and is related to a homosexual. We should be most sensitive to this person and extend the help of compassion to them, not run down their relative. In today's world we must be most sensitive and show compassion toward those who are related in some way to those who choose to live a sinful life. As far as the homosexual is concerned, who has chosen a life that is abominable to God, we extend compassion in

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helping them come out of their sinfulness in a spirit of gentleness — which we will cover in Col. 3:12 (Gal. 6:1-2).

Colossians 3:12 Put on, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

Next, we will examine another impact of Spiritual Love in the life of a believer filled with the Holy Spirit - *kindness*.