

God is Full of Compassion (Pt 1 Compassion)

Today we begin a new study of the word *compassion* in the Scriptures. There are 41 occurrences of the word *compassion* in 39 verses and 2 occurrences of *compassions*. According to the Oxford dictionary the word *compassion* means "pity inclining one to spare or help" and compassionate means "Sympathetic, pitying, allowance (granted when an ordinary pension or allowance is not admissible under the official rules)". But what is the meaning of the word in the context of Holy Scripture? Before we consider our points for this study we will provide a comprehensive review of the Scriptures looking at the various Hebrew and Greek words that are translated *compassion*, and an evaluation of the meaning from the English text of the 1611 Authorised Bible.

a) Hebrew

There is one Hebrew word translated into the English word *compassion* and that is *rachamim* which is also translated bowels, tender love, great mercies, tender mercies, mercy, to be pitied, and pity.

There is one Hebrew word translated into the English phrase *full of compassion* and that is *rachum* which is also translated merciful.

There are two Hebrew words translated into the English phrase *to have compassion on* and they include:

- i) *chamai* which is also translated to pity, to have pity and to spare, and
- ii) *racham* which is also translated merciful, mercy, to have mercy, to pity, to have pity and surely.

b) Greek

There are five Greek words translated *compassion*:-

- i) *eleeo* which is also translated; obtain mercy, have mercy on, receive mercy, show mercy and have pity on, and
- ii) *metriopatheo* is only translated to have compassion, and
- iii) *oiktiro* is only translated to have compassion on, but *oiktirmos* is translated mercies, and mercy, and
- iv) *sp planknizomai* is also translated to be moved with compassion, and *sp plankna* is also translated bowels, inward affection and tender mercy, and
- v) *sumpatheo* is also translated be touched with a feeling of.

c) Meaning of *compassion* from the 1611 Authorised Bible

i) Compassion is to have pity

Eze.16: 5 *None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.*

See also Matt.18: 33.

ii) Compassion is shown when help is provided to meet a need

Mk.5: 19 *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

See also Mk.9: 22 & 1Jn.3: 17

E.g. Lk.10: 33 *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion [on him].*

His compassion led him to pay for the man's expenses (verse 35).

iii) Compassion is the result of mercy (God has compassion because he delights in mercy).

Mic.7: 18 *Who [is] a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever; because he delighteth [in] mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

See also Lam.3:32 & Rom.9:15

iv) Compassion moves a person to forgiveness

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

v) Compassion moves a person to have undeserved favour (grace)

Lk 15:20 *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 father's compassion led him to put on a feast (verse 23).

Having established a dictionary meaning and the various definitions from within the context of Scripture we can now say that *compassion* encompasses pity and sparing, the result of mercy and love, and can result in forgiveness.

In this study we will also consider two points:-

1. the Lord is full of compassion, and
2. the Lord's compassions fail not.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. The Lord God is full of compassion

Ps.145:8 *The Lord [is] gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

See also Ps.78:38, 86:15, 111:4 & 112:4

The verses which say that the Lord is full of compassion include other attributes of God, therefore, we could also say from our verses in Psalms that God is full of forgiveness, grace, longsuffering, mercy, truth and righteousness. Interestingly when you look up the words *God* and *full* we establish that God is full of righteousness (see Ps.48: 10) and His voice is full of power and majesty (see Ps.29: 4). Hence the Lord has so much compassion, forgiveness, grace, longsuffering, mercy, truth, righteousness, power and majesty, that He cannot hold anymore, He is *full*. He is full in the same sense as a water tower is full of water, it can hold no more water. Let me therefore suggest that the Lord's compassion is limitless; His ability to forgive is not limited to a specific number of people which can be washed clean of sin, and therefore receive eternal life in heaven. Hence the teaching of the Jehovah Witness is false, that 144,000 people will go to heaven and rule as kings. Why? Because the Lord God Almighty, the God of the Bible is full of compassion.

The Lord's compassion was shown to Israel when they obeyed His commandments (see Deut.30: 3, 13: 7, 1Kg.8: 50 & 2Chr 36:15). When Israel obeyed God after a time of their enemies warring with them He showed them compassion by their enemies having compassion on them (see 2Chr.30: 9).

Why did God have compassion on Israel? Not because they were a righteous nation and not because they were an obedient nation! But rather, Paul reminds the church that the Lord has compassion on those whom He will have compassion on (see Rom.9: 15), and God chose to have mercy and compassion on Israel because of His covenant with Abraham (see 1Kg.13: 23). The Scriptures also say that God had compassion on the nation of Israel because He retains not his anger and delights in mercy (see Mic.7: 18).

So, which other gods have compassion on their people? According to the rhetorical question put by Micah, only the Lord pardons iniquity and retains not His anger (see Mic.7: 18). Remembering that part of showing compassion is forgiveness of sin, it won't surprise you that other gods are unable to show compassion because a person's sins are *only* forgiven and washed away by blood (see Heb.9: 22), and no man-made religion provides a blood sacrifice for the sins of the world. Therefore, *no* other god shows mercy, forgiveness or compassion.

God also shows compassion through His Son the Lord Jesus. When Christ was on earth He looked upon the multitude and had compassion by meeting their needs, He either healed them to meet their need of health, or offered himself as their Saviour, to meet their need of a shepherd (see Matt.9: 36). And given that the Lord Jesus Christ *is* God manifest in the flesh (1Tim.3: 16), a member of the triune Godhead (see Col.2: 9), then God Almighty showed the early church compassion by miracles of healing through His Son. Today God shows His compassion in His love, His forgiveness, His mercy, His grace to those who believe His Son, to those who believe Him, love Him and obey Him. To them He provides pity from the fullness of His compassion.

Do you know of God's compassion?

Do you know of God's pity in your every-day life?

When you are weak does God provide you with strength as a sign of His compassion as Jesus had compassion on the weak and the sick, and healed them?

When you need help does God fulfil your need as a sign of His compassion as Jesus had compassion on the multitude?

Believers today know God's compassion every day, when they stop and think about what the Lord did on Calvary. And for the non-believers God has compassion on them every day He stops them falling into the pit of hell, because every day they are not in the pit is another day He has given them to choose life, believe and receive eternal life. God is full of compassion; He has enough compassion for the whole world. Through His compassion He meets the world's needs in Christ Jesus, whether they are brothers and sisters in Iran who are being persecuted, or the starving children in Africa.

Let us remember that God is full of compassion, and let us remember to thank Him for His compassion each day.

2. God's compassions fail not.

Lam 3:22 *[It is of] the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

See also Lam 3:32

Given that God is full of compassion, mercy and forgiveness; it will not surprise you to know that the Scriptures of truth also say that the Lord's mercies and compassions fail not.

Given that Allah of the Koran does not see his followers as sinners, he has no need to forgive them, no need to show them mercy, and his compassion must fail because he has no need to show them compassion. Does Allah sound like the God of the Bible, but under a different name? Even though Allah has no son there are still scholars who believe he is the same as the God of the Bible. But when you add in the fact that Allah's compassion fails because he has no

need to forgive sin or punish those who do sin then Allah is not the same God as Jehovah God of Holy Scripture. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not willing that any should perish (see 2Pet.3: 9), but for those who come to *Him* with a humble heart, who seek His forgiveness and repent, He is faithful and will forgive their sin, because His compassions fail not.

Remember that when Jesus looked on the multitude He had compassion, and fed them, healed them and died on the cross that they would have a shepherd, because they wandered about as sheep with no shepherd (see Matt.9: 36 & Mk.6: 34). From the beginning to the end of His life the Lord Jesus' compassion never failed. Yet there are people out there that believe their sin is too great to be forgiven. There are those that are lost who claim God would not show them mercy or compassion because they are clothed with manifold transgressions. But as sin abounded grace abounded more (see Rom.5: 20), which means that God's compassion never fails, His compassion continues to abound and abound in the sight of more and more sin. So let us encourage the lost who feel overwhelmed by their sin to come to the One who can wash them in His blood and make them whiter than snow when they believe on His name.

Whereas, if those sinners with overwhelming iniquities were to join the Muslim religion Allah would run out of compassion before they dropped to their knees to ask for forgiveness.

If those sinners with manifold transgressions believed they found Jesus in the RC institution, and believed in purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the Mass as a time for receiving the grace of God, then they are not receiving the compassionate Christ of the Bible, who desires to save the sinner by believing the Gospel of Christ, but rather they believe they can earn Christ's healing by working for their salvation. Whereas God shows us compassion in Christ, and that grace and mercy is free. You either receive it, or you reject it. You can never buy it or earn His compassion that fails not.

Have you ever got up from your knees after saying I am sorry to God, after repenting from your sin only to find that your God did not have enough compassion to forgive you or show you mercy?

Whereas, parents from time to time lose their willingness to show their children mercy, grace, forgiveness and compassion, because they do not have the Lord, they are too young to understand the needs of their children or they are simply too selfish to think of their children's need for compassion.

Our compassion for our family members, the lost and for our brethren is to be similar to that unfailing compassion of the Lord. And given that forgiveness is linked to compassion it would not surprise you that the Lord says we are to forgive our brethren not just seven times, but "seventy times seven" (Matt.18: 22), because our mercies, our bowls of mercy, our compassions are to be like our Father's which fail not.

Do you know that the Lord's compassion for the lost, the Lord's compassion and mercy toward you will *never* fail? If a lost man walked in to your house and told you all the wicked and abominable things he had done, would you tell him that the Lord's compassions would fail because of the abundance of his sin? Of course not! Because according to Holy Scripture the Lord's compassions fail not. Let us always remember that truth and rejoice in God's compassions.

Having said what we have said let us say it again. In this our first study on the word *compassion* we established that *compassion* encompasses pity and sparing, the result of mercy and love, and can result in forgiveness. In addition we have covered two points which include; (1) the Lord is full of compassion, and (2) the Lord's compassions fail not.