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# **Being The Hands Of Jesus Through Our Compassion (Part I)**

## **MATTHEW 9:35-38**

### **Introduction**

1. What does it mean to be a compassionate individual?
2. What do we mean by the word compassion?
3. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary describes compassion as "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it."
4. We demonstrate compassion when we . . .
  - a. Seek to share the painful feelings of another person.
  - b. Work to alleviate his or her distress.
5. The 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, said, "Compassion is the basis of all morality."
6. Western civilizations these days place great importance on filling the human 'brain' with knowledge, but no one seems to care about filling the human 'heart' with compassion. (*Dalai Lama*)
7. Jesus, as God in the flesh, was known for His compassion:
  - a. It was what He desired in others.
  - b. It occupied an important place in His teaching.
  - c. We often find it as His response to the human need He encountered.
8. Today, I would like to share with you Part I of what will be a two part sermon on the theme of "Being the Hands of Jesus Our Compassion."
  - a. In today's lesson, we will look at the compassion of God as it is revealed to us in the Old Testament, and what we can learn from His compassion.

- b. Next week, we will return to this theme by looking at the compassion of Jesus and how we are to show that same compassion in our lives.
- 9. My goal is that we each will seek to emulate both our heavenly Father and His son in our own daily living.
- 10. May God cause us as His people to be known for our compassion.

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## **I. Our Compassionate God**

### **A. GOD'S DECLARATION TO MOSES ON MOUNT SINAI**

“Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;” (Exodus 34:6)

- 1. We have looked at this passage before when we were considering the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as Christians.
- 2. The Israelites had sinned at Mount Sinai while Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from God.
- 3. Aaron had fashioned an idol in the image of a gold calf to represent God.
- 4. Moses had broken the original stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, ground the golden calf to powder, put it in the people's water and made them drink it.
- 5. When he went back up on the mountain for God to write on a new set of tablets the law a second time.
- 6. As the Lord descended in a cloud and stood in front of Moses, He proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.” (Exodus 34:6)
- 7. This proclamation was made to Moses after the Israelites had fashioned and worshiped the golden calf.

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### **B. MOSES' WORDS TO THE ISRAELITES PRIOR TO CROSSING INTO THE**

## **PROMISED LAND**

“For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”  
(Deuteronomy 4:31)

1. For 40 years Moses had seen one example after another of God’s compassion toward His people.
2. God’s compassion toward the Israelites wasn’t because they were such good people.
3. A little later in this same address, in Deuteronomy 9:6, Moses said to them, “Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.”
4. In verse 13 of Deuteronomy 9, Moses shared something which God had said of them, “I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people.”
5. The Israelites were not the recipients of God’s compassion because of their righteousness, but because of who God is, “a compassionate God,” who as Moses said “will not fail you or destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them” (Deuteronomy 4:31).
6. In the same way, you and I are the recipients of God’s compassion, not because of some extraordinary goodness within us, but because of God’s great compassion.

“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,” (Titus 3:4–5)

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

(Ephesians 2:4–6)

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### C. THE DECLARATION OF DAVID

“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.” (Psalm 103:8)

1. In Psalm 103:8, David wrote, “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.” (Psalm 103:8)
2. Two verses later, in verse 10, he added, “He [God] has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

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## II. God’s Demonstration Of His Compassion

### A. AT SODOM AND GOMORRAH

“But he [Lot] hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.” (Genesis 19:16)

1. In Genesis 19, Moses records for us the account of God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. Earlier, the Lord had promised Abraham that He would not destroy the cities if ten righteous people could be found within them.
3. However, the only righteous people found in the two cities were Abraham’s nephew, Lot, Lot’s wife and his two daughters.
4. On the morning the destruction was to take place, the two angels which God had sent to rescue Lot and his family warned him to take his family and flee.
5. In verse 16, we learn that Lot hesitated.
6. “So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his

two daughters . . . and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.”

7. The reason for their doing this is found in the middle of the verse, “for the compassion of the Lord was upon him.”
8. Though God’s righteous wrath demanded the destruction of those cities because of their sin, His compassion sought to spare Lot and his family.
  - ❑ God’s compassion reaches out to us to save us from the brunt of His wrath directed at those around us who persist in their sin.

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## B. AT NINEVEH

“He prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.” (Jonah 4:2)

1. The Assyrian Empire in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. was known for its brutality.
2. The capital city of Nineveh was according to Jonah 1:2 a wicked city.
3. God instructed a prophet named Jonah to go there and prophesy against the city.
4. However, Jonah did not want to carry out his assignment, so he tried to flee from God by boarding a ship headed in the opposite direction.
5. After spending three days and nights inside a great fish, Jonah reluctantly agreed to do what God had commanded.
6. He declared God’s coming destruction upon the city.
7. The people repented and Jonah became angry.
8. “He prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning

calamity.” (Jonah 4:2)

9. He even asked God to take his life, because he said, “death is better to me than life” (Jonah 4:3).
10. God asked him, “Do you have good reason to be angry?” (Jonah 4:4).
11. Jonah went outside the city, built himself a shelter and sat under it to see what would happen in the city.
12. God caused a plant to grow up over Jonah to provide Him shade — Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.
13. At dawn the following day, God appointed a worm to attack the plant so that it withered.
14. Next, God “appointed a scorching east wind” (v. 8)
  - a. “The sun beat down on Jonah’s head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die”
  - b. Again he said, “Death is better to me than life.”
15. God asked Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?”
16. Jonah responded, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death” (v. 9).
17. The Lord then said to him, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight” (v. 10).
18. He then asked Jonah, “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”” (Jonah 4:11)
19. The God you and I serve has not changed. The apostle Peter said of Him, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to

repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

## Conclusion

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1. In Ephesians 5:1, the apostle Paul instructs us as Christians, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.”
2. The “therefore” refers to something he wrote previously.

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3. In Ephesians 4:32, we find these words, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”
4. Just as children seek to imitate their parents, so we are to imitate our heavenly Father.
5. As David wrote in Psalm 103:8, “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.”
6. If we are to imitate Him, we, as Christians, should seek to be the same.
7. It is the only way we will change the world in which we live.
8. If you aren’t a Christian today, please know that God, in His compassion, is reaching out to you, offering you forgiveness of your sins through His Son’s sacrifice.
9. He wants to change your heart and make it more like His own.
10. Will you come to Him today?