

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## How Deep Is Your Compassion?

(Jerry Fite)

**P**aul exhorts the Christians at Colossae to “*Put on therefore as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion...*” (*Colossians 3:12*). As God’s people who are chosen in Christ, set apart or made holy in Him and loved by God, we are to put on a “*heart of compassion*”. The fact that we as Christians must put it on, implies this characteristic is not a common trait. Let us take a closer look.

Notice Paul does not say put on compassion, but rather a “heart” of compassion. This is not just saying one should have an “attitude” of compassion, or just “feel” pity or sympathy for others. It is expressing the “emotional depth” that our compassion should manifest.

The Greek word translated, “heart” is SPLAGCHNA, which denotes our innermost parts. To the Greeks the word denoted the heart, lungs, liver and intestines. The word is therefore plural and often translated in the King James Version as “bowels”. When Paul calls God as a witness as to his feelings for the Philippi-

ans, he says, “*I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*” (*Philippians 1:8*). Paul is not connecting his feelings for them with the literal bowels of Jesus, but as the Greek speaking world would understand, His feelings for them are from the depths of his emotions just as Jesus feels deeply for them. Do we not do the same when we say, “*I love you from the bottom of my heart*”? We are expressing the depth of our love. Likewise our compassion should run strong from the depth of our being.

This word is used to denote the compassion Jesus manifested. “*And He came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick*” (*Matthew 14:14*). He did not heal the sick just to work miracles and prove his Deity; He was first “*moved with compassion*” and then healed the sick. His feelings ran deep to see people suffering in sickness. It moved him to relieve their plight.

Jesus was likewise moved to see the spiritual condition of his fellow man. “*But when He saw*

*the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered as sheep not having a Shepherd*” (*Matthew 9:36*). Such deep compassion for their souls motivated Him as the good shepherd to exhort his disciples to pray for more laborers to bring these souls to Him (*Matthew 9:37*).

We must guard against feeling pity for others superficially. More than once I have heard people say when viewing the terrible plight of others, “*There but by the grace of God go I*”. What does this mean? It may be merely expressing the appreciation for one’s own fortunes contrasted to the misfortunes of others. This pity or compassion for the other person may be only a quick stepping stone to think more about how blessed you are.

Feeling compassion deeply for others should move us to help as we can. “*But whoso hath the world’s goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him*” (*1 John 3:17*).