

SABBATH THOUGHT 2025-02-22—COMPASSION & *CHESED*

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Which would you rather have from God? His compassion or mercy? Actually, it is a trick question. *Compassion* is sympathy for the sufferings of others whereas *mercy* is taking action to alleviate that suffering. To be completely accurate, compassion is a heartfelt reaction to the plight of others that is FOLLOWED by mercy, works that relieve suffering. Do you see the connection?

SYMPATHY = Pity or sorrow toward those who suffer.

MERCY = Beneficent works.

COMPASSION = Sympathy + Mercy.

**DEFINITION:** Compassion is heartfelt sympathy for people who suffer, followed by works of mercy to relieve the suffering. Compassion *without* mercy is merely sympathy because compassion, by definition, includes works of mercy.

In the end, all desire God's compassion from which come works of mercy that relieves our burdens. God's compassion is His motivation for His mercy to relieve our afflictions, but many Bible translations do not properly translate compassion and mercy. The English words are either used interchangeably or swapped. Notice one example comparing the KJV with The Scriptures (2009)<sup>1</sup>:

[KJV] PSALM 103:8 The LORD is merciful [*rachuw*] and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy [*chesed*].

[TS2009] PSALMS 103:8 [The LORD] is compassionate [*rachuw*] and showing favour, patient, and great in loving-commitment [*chesed*].

The KJV almost always mistranslates the two Hebrew words *racham* (H7356) and *chesed* (H2617) and their various forms. (This is a little technical, but bear with me.) *Racham* means *compassionate*, not *merciful* and most of the time one should mentally insert 'compassionate' when reading Scripture. The other word, *chesed*, does not translate into English well at all. The KJV usually translates it mercy, goodness, lovingkindness, etc. However, this does not give a proper sense of the meaning of *chesed*.

The TS2009 translates *chesed* as the hyphenated word *loving-commitment*, indicating it has components of love and fidelity. There is no single word in the English for *chesed*, which conveys the idea of covenant loyalty and devotion<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The TS2009 is an excellent translation with better literal accuracy than the KJV while maintaining readability. This is particularly true with subtleties like compassion and mercy. However, it uses Hebrew names such as יהוה (YHWH). These have been changed to match the KJV for readability.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, refer to the [Sabbath Thought 2023-04-15 - Hese](#) = Covenant Loyalty & Devotion.

Devotion covers the range of love, affection, faithfulness, and fidelity. This is what the TS2009 is trying to convey with *loving-commitment* and why the meaning of *chesed* is completely lost when it is translated *mercy* in the KJV. It is important to understand the meaning of *chesed* because God's COMPASSION and *CHESED* are founded in every covenant with Him. Notice this verse:

[TS2009] LUKE 1:72 [*God spoke*] to show compassion toward our fathers and to remember His [holy] covenant,

God's purpose behind all of our prayers is *CHESED*—loyalty and devotion to His covenant. Translating *chesed* simply as *mercy* is inadequate because there is no connection to a COVENANT with God. *Chesed* has everything to do with a covenant because God's loyalty and devotion is the basis for fulfilling it. When His people cry out to Him for help, they seek His COMPASSION, which is His motivation to show mercy and fulfill His covenant promises. Most often our hope is to receive His mercy NOW and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that; however, God's covenant loyalty and devotion—His *chesed*—govern His response to our supplications. He is *always* compassionate but His response—His merciful WORKS to alleviate our suffering—is dependent upon His greater purpose of bringing eternal children into His Kingdom:

2 PETER 3:15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

In other words, He is always compassionate toward our prayers but His merciful response may be delayed, come from an unexpected place, or be something unrelated. Why? Because “we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22). If His response is not what or when we had hoped for, know of a certainty that whatsoever He does is to make “all things work together for good”<sup>3</sup> for the greater purpose of fulfilling His covenant by changing us from the physical to spiritual. This is evident in these verses:

[TS2009] ROMANS 9:15, 23 For He [*God*] says to [*Moses*], “I shall favour whomever I favour, and I shall have compassion on whomever I have compassion.” ... 23 and that He might make known the riches of His esteem [or favor] on vessels of [His] compassion, which He had prepared beforehand for esteem [*or favor*],

God assesses our spiritual needs in this physical life because “we are His workmanship” (Eph. 2:10). The WORK He is doing in each of us is to create eternal children. Eternity influences His decisions of how and when our prayers are answered. God's vision is from the eternity past to the eternity to come so His *chesed*—covenant loyalty and devotion—is EVERLASTING:

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<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8:28.

[TS2009] PSALM 136:1 Give thanks to [the LORD], for He is good! For **His loving-commitment [chesed] is everlasting.**

God's *chesed*—covenant loyalty and devotion—will never fail. Likewise, God's "**compassions [racham] fail not**" (Lam. 3:22). Together, His compassion and *chesed*—covenant loyalty and devotion—are for the purpose of eternal life:

[TS2009] PSALM 103:4 **[The LORD] redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving-commitment [chesed] and compassion.**

DEFINITION: God's compassion leads to His MERCY, which is rooted in His *chesed*—covenant loyalty and devotion—because His ultimate purpose is "bringing many sons [and daughters] to glory [or favor]."<sup>4</sup>

But *chesed*—covenant loyalty and devotion—is what God also desires from US:

[TS2009] HOSEA 6:6 "For I [God] delight in **loving-commitment [chesed]** and not slaughtering, and in the knowledge of Elohim more than ascending [burnt] offerings.

God also desires compassion from all who are in covenant with Him:

[TS2009] 1 TIMOTHY 1:16 But because of this I [Paul] received **compassion**, so that in me first, [Jesus Christ] might display all patience, **as an example to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.**

[FV] 1 JOHN 3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and **sees his brother in need, and shuts up his feelings of compassion from him**, how can the love of God be dwelling in him?

God demands both compassion and *chesed*—covenant loyalty and devotion—among all those of the *ekklesia*. Why? Because everyone under the same New Covenant with God has received compassion and *chesed* for their sins:

[TS2009] PSALMS 51:1 Show me favour, O Elohim, according to Your **loving-commitment [chesed]**; according to the greatness of Your **compassion**, blot out my transgressions.

Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins because of His compassion and *chesed*. The depths of His agape love is unsearchable:

EPHESIANS 3:17-19 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded **in love**, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints **what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ** which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

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<sup>4</sup> Heb. 2:10.

The is why Jesus Christ commanded that we have agape love for one another as HE loves us<sup>5</sup>. Although Scripture says this is a “new commandment,” it has actually existed from days of old in the form of compassion and *chesed*:

[TS2009] ZECHARIAH 7:9 “Thus said [the LORD] of hosts, ‘Execute true right-ruling, **show loving-commitment [*chesed*] and compassion everyone to his brother.**”

All of this is why it is *chesed* is not simply *mercy*. Notice how the correct translation changes one of the most well-known verses of the Bible:

[TS2009] MATTHEW 5:7 “Blessed are the **compassionate**, because they shall obtain **compassion**.”

Works of mercy without compassion or sympathy are done for selfish purposes. Many these days donate money to charitable organizations but they do not actually care for those who need the help—they do it for tax write-offs. To truly be merciful requires compassion and God BLESSES those who are compassionate AND merciful.

Compassion is not just a feeling. It ALWAYS responds with works of mercy. When Jesus encountered people who were suffering, Scripture says “He was **moved** with compassion.”<sup>6</sup> Why does it say He was MOVED? Because He ACTED with works of mercy to alleviate the suffering He saw. Notice the case when He fed the 5,000:

MATTHEW 14:14-16 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and **He was moved with compassion** for them, and healed their sick. 15 When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” 16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

Not only did He heal the sick, but He also fed them. He was MOVED with compassion to DO works of mercy. Agape love produces compassion toward those who suffer, compassion results in mercy, and mercy produces Good Works. This is the full circle of the agape love of God in us!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>5</sup> John 13:34; 15:12.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 9:36; 14:14;18:27; Mark 1:41; 6:34.