

“Compassion for the Downcast”  
Exodus 22:21-27  
(Preached at Trinity, May 11, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at the section of Exodus known as the “Book of the Covenant.” It covers **Chapters 21-24** of Exodus. As we’ve seen, in this section of the Book of Exodus God begins to give a lengthy application to the Ten Commandments. It contains civil laws based upon the Moral law. The Ten Commandments is a statement of God’s moral law; what God requires of men. The “Book of the Covenant” gives instructions of what to do when the Law is broken.
2. These chapters cover a wide range of situations.  
We’ve looked at the subject of masters and slaves and of how slaves should be treated.  
We’ve looked at matters of personal injury.  
We’ve looked at how to apply the Law with regard to personal property. These passages are speaking of justice as it ought to be.  
We’ve looked at the matter of sex before marriage. God gives us rules as to how we should live. There are only two courses of life. We will either live God’s way or we will live according to our feelings. We will allow God to direct our lives or we will seek to satisfy our lusts.
3. Last week we looked at how individuals were dealt with who completely repudiate God. In spite of having a knowledge of Him they deny Him. God says they shall be utterly cut off, devoted to destruction. They shall be declared anathema.
4. Tonight as we continue with **Verses 21-27** we find specific instruction with regard to those who are downcast, those who are weak and helpless.  
Here we find instructions in the treatment of strangers, widows and orphans, and the poor.  
**ESV Deuteronomy 10:17-18** – “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”
5. God demands that we have compassion upon those who are weak or downcast.  
Compassion defined – “Pity for the suffering or distress of another”
6. God is sovereign over the condition of life for everyone living on the face of the earth.  
**1 Samuel 2:7-8** – “The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. <sup>8</sup> He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them.”
7. One of God’s purposes for placing men in need is that others might come to their aid. The Bible presents God as having particular care upon those who are weak and helpless.  
**Psalms 146:9** – “The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.”

8. Compassion upon those who are downcast is the essence of Christianity. It is the essence of genuine love.  
**James 1:27** – “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
- I. True religion demands love and compassion for others
- A. Worship of God cannot be removed from our relationship with others
1. How we care for others is an expression of our heart  
**Matthew 25:40** – “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”  
**1 John 3:17** – “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”
    - a. Can we say that we love God when the hungry go unfed?
    - b. Can we say that we love God when we do not visit the sick?
  2. Can we say we love God and be harsh and unforgiving towards others?  
**Ephesians 4:1-3** – “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”  
**Colossians 3:12-14** – “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*. And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”
- B. Our greatest example was Christ - Jesus was full of compassion.  
**Matthew 9:36** – “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”  
**Matthew 14:14** – “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”  
**Mark 1:40-41** – “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”
- C. Compassion is one of God’s attributes  
**Psalms 86:15** – “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”  
**Psalms 111:4** – “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.”
1. Sin has brought much suffering upon the earth – yet God has shown great compassion and pity  
 Our very existence reveals the compassion of God.  
**Lamentations 3:22** – “*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*”

2. Out of God's great compassion He has granted us a period of time before the final judgment and the full outpouring of His wrath
    - a. Since the fall of Adam each second of time has been by God's grace - Each second is a gift – we must be wise stewards
    - b. The lost person does not realize that he is on borrowed time granted by a compassionate God  
**Psalm 78:38** – “But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.”
- B. God has particular compassion for His children
1. Demonstrated in sending Jesus to die for us  
**Romans 5:8** – “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
  2. He has particular care for His own.  
 We must never do anything to harm one of God's little ones.  
**Exodus 22:23** – “If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;”
- II. God commands that as He has shown us compassion, we must also have compassion upon our fellow man  
**Zechariah 7:9** – “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:”
- A. We are all in the same condition
1. God tells Israel to have compassion upon the stranger because they were strangers  
**Exodus 22:21** – “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
  2. God has had compassion upon us as sinners. We must have compassion upon others.
  3. We must have patience, mercy, and compassion upon their blindness
    - a. Would you strike a blind man for accidentally bumping into you?
    - b. The example of our Lord  
**Luke 23:34** – “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”
    - c. The example of Stephen  
**Acts 7:60** – “And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”
    - d. If God has forgiven you of your great sin should you not be compassionate towards others – **See Matt. 18:21-35**
- B. Our attitude towards others must not be controlled by their action or how we might view of them
1. There are some people who are vile, hateful, evil
  2. Our behavior must not be controlled by their actions  
**Romans 12:14** – “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.”
- C. Our compassion must be motivated by our love - Love is not a feeling!
1. Our compassion must lead to acts of benevolence

2. Our compassion must lead us to strive to lead them to Christ

III. How does our duty to demonstrate compassion for all work out in practice?

A. The Bible teaches us to love all men.

1. We must love our neighbor as our self

**Mark 12:32-33** – “. . . there is one God; and there is none other but he: <sup>33</sup> And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

2. Who is our neighbor?

a. According to the Jews, any member of the Hebrew race

b. According to Christ, any other man irrespective of race or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet

B. God mentions three groups in particular

1. The stranger

**Verse 21** – “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him”

a. They had no home, no land to grow food, no friends - perhaps they didn't know the language

b. This says much about our own immigration issue

2. The fatherless and widow

They had no father, no husband – no provider or protector

3. The poor – they had no money, they had fallen into debt and were down to only one garment.

4. God's instruction is clear – do not oppress them. Do not take advantage of their condition

a. God demands that we care for the poor

**Leviticus 19:9-10** - “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather *every* grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.”

b. In our text God told Israel to lend now expecting to receive gain

**Exodus 22:25** – “If thou lend money to *any of* my people *that is* poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.”

c. In other words, they were to care for them for compassion's sake.

5. God promises to bless the man who cares for the poor

**Psalms 41:1** – “Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.”

**Proverbs 22:9** – “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

**Proverbs 25:21-22** – “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

**Proverbs 28:27** – “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.”

- B. Besides all men in general we have a high obligation is to care for our own family  
**1 Timothy 5:8** – “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”
1. Husbands must provide sacrificially  
**Ephesians 5:25** – “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”
  2. It is an empty religion that does not provide for family  
 (the example of “Corban”)  
**Mark 7:9-11** - “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free.*”
- C. Finally, we have a high obligation to care for the brethren, particularly those of our own Church  
**Galatians 6:10** – “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”
1. Example of the poor & destitute in the early church  
**Acts 2:44-45** – “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.”  
**1 Corinthians 16:1-2** – “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”
  2. Example of the widows in the early church
    1. The church was to help those who had no family  
**1 Timothy 5:3** – “Honour widows that are widows indeed.”
    2. Those who had family were to be provided for by the family  
**1 Timothy 5:16** – “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.”
- D. We demonstrate our love for each other by our care for each other  
**1 John 2:9-10** - “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even - until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”  
**1 John 4:7- 8** - “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”  
**1 John 3:17** – “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

- E. Christ considers Christians an extension of Himself  
**Matthew 10:40** – “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.  
**Matthew 10:42** - “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”  
**Matthew 25:37-40** – “Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”

#### Conclusion:

1. If God is sovereign over your condition why has He made you thus?
  - A. If you have a land to call your own should you not be merciful to the stranger?
  - B. If you have wealth should you not care for the poor?  
 When we begin to think the purpose of our money is to get a home, a car, to satisfy our desires we cease to have a Christian mindset.
2. If we don't show compassion to the downcast we forget that God has shown compassion to us.
3. It is truly a matter of the heart. Are you harsh towards others? Are you proud? Do you have compassion towards others? Are you filled with pity towards those who are downcast?  
 May God grant us to have true compassion.  
NAS **Colossians 3:12** – “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;”