

Compassion Fruit Juice

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We kept Paige, our granddaughter, for a while the summer in which she celebrated her fourth birthday. She may have taught us more than we did her during that visit. One day at mealtime she informed us she wanted “compassion fruit juice” to drink. We only barely restrained our extreme amusement. She had overheard us talking about one of the juice cocktails we occasionally buy, containing **passion** fruit juice. Her innocent malapropism contains an important moral.

Compassion means “to feel with.” The Gospel accounts frequently call attention to the Lord’s compassion. The multitudes who were as sheep without a shepherd provoked His compassion (Mat. 9:36). He had compassion on the hungry, the physically disabled and diseased, the demon-possessed, and those in sorrow (Mat. 14:14; 8:2; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; Luke 7:13). Jesus glamorized and exalted compassion in at least three of His parables (Mat. 18:27; Luke 10:33; 15:20). Indeed, our Savior is one who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15). Had He not possessed the beautiful trait of compassion for us to such a great degree, He may never have left Heaven to die for us. He saw our pitiful, confused, and desperate condition and had compassion on us to His utter self-sacrifice. We should ceaselessly praise Him for His compassion.

After the Lord’s example, the apostles urged compassion on us. Although Paul did not use the actual word Romans 12:15, compassion is inherent in his instruction: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Peter’s words summarize the teaching of the Bible on this subject: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Pet. 3:8). I am persuaded that many grievous problems in congregations could have been and can be avoided by the practice of compassion.

Perhaps the sphere in which compassion is most often absent is in our everyday relationships (i.e., in our families and at work or school). We all need a drink of “compassion fruit juice” when we let impatience, hypercriticism, and the wrong sort of intolerance squelch our compassion for others in their weaknesses, needs, and problems. It would also be nice if we could pour a glass of it for those rude, harsh, unkind folk with whom we must all periodically deal.

While compassion (“longsuffering”) is a “fruit,” it is produced by the teaching of the Holy Spirit rather than by a literal tree (Gal. 5:22). We will not find it sold by the bottle or by simply drinking a glass of juice. This beautiful and needed trait is the fruit of instruction, practice, sensitivity, and unselfishness. May we all imbibe more of it.

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