

Venom: Emotion: The Mandate for Compassion, Ephesians 4:32b

- a. Honor Code principle #1

Romans 12:3 - ... stop thinking of yourself in terms of arrogance beyond what you ought to think ...

- b. Development of humility is the first order of the day if you are to stay out of God's doghouse tomorrow:

1 Peter 5:5b - ... all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God makes war against the arrogant, but He gives grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:6 - Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, in order that He may exalt you at the proper time.

- c. King Solomon offers his sagely wisdom on the subject of arrogance in:

Proverbs 16:17 - The highway [*mesilla*: facilitated lifestyle of] the righteous is to depart from evil; he who watches his [*derek*] behavior patterns preserves his life.

Proverbs 16:18 - Arrogance [*ga'on*: cynical insensitivity to the needs of others and the presumption of superiority] precedes destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Proverbs 16:19 - It is better to be of a humble spirit with the [*'anaw*: grace oriented] than to divide spoil with the arrogant.

- d. If any of these apply then our passage orders you to get a new attitude by means of the recovery process:

Ephesians 4:32 - But become kind, performing gracious acts toward each other ...

The application of grace to others begins to occur after one has been a major beneficiary of grace himself. None of us deserve to survive another day. Yet God continuously exhibits His lovingkindness without measure.

This is the manner by which we are to become kind in our actions toward our fellow believers. It is expressed by the nominative plural predicate adjective of: *eusplagchnos* - Lit: "with healthy intestines." The KJV & NAS each have "tenderhearted" but the NIV is best with "compassionate."

Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "splagchnon":

Lit: to eat the inward parts of a sacrificial animal, especially the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys. Metaphorically: the seat of one's feelings [or emotions], e.g., anger, love, pity.

Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "eusplagchnos":

The good heart; healthy bowels; compassionate.

What we see commanded here is a transformation of the emotional life. The best English word to indicate what is meant by the Greek metaphorical expression is “*compassionate*.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word as the “*emotion when a person is moved by the suffering or distress of another and by the desire to relieve it.*” The major lexicons and dictionaries compare *eusplagchnos* with words for longsuffering, lovingkindness, and mercy in both the Old and New Testaments.

Unger, Merrill F. Unger’s Bible Dictionary. 3d ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1966, p. 713:

Mercy (Heb. hesed, lovingkindness; Gr. eleos, compassion). Mercy is a form of love determined by the state or condition of its objects. Their state is one of suffering and need, while they may be unworthy or ill-deserving. Mercy is a Christian grace and is very strongly urged toward all men.

International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. “TENDER”:

English versions of the Bible translate the Hebrew word rahamim, “bowels,” by “tender mercies,” and this translation has been carried into the New Testament as “tender mercy” for the corresponding Greek phrase splanchna eleous in:

Luke 1:78 - Because of the tender mercy of our God ...

Compare the translation “*tenderhearted*” for the Greek *eusplagchnos* in Ephesians 4:32. It is based on the idea of psychology widely spread among Semitic people, which considers the “*bowels*” as the seat of all tender emotions of kindness and mercy.

R. B. Thieme, Jr. reminds us of the ancient custom of using the inward parts of the physical body to illustrate the seat of certain functions of the soul.

Thieme, R. B., Jr. Levitical Offerings. Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1973, p. 58:

The ancients often used a physical organ to convey some inner feeling. The heart represented thought. The arm symbolized strength. The liver portrayed temperament. In that sense, the kidneys expressed man’s emotions and were thought to be the seat of his desires.

The intestines are a part of this as is indicated by the **International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. “BOWELS”:**

In figurative language, the Hebrew rahamim and the Greek splanchnon denote deep emotions of various kinds. The ancients expressed by these terms “affection,” “sympathy,” and “mercy,” feelings of distress and sorrow.

Now please note what we have in the context of our passage:

1. We have gone the gamut from impulsive anger in Ephesians 4:26a to chronic sinful thought in Ephesians 4:26b.
2. This leads to emotional explosions in Ephesians 4:31 as the vindictive thinking billows into action by some minor trigger mechanism.
3. All of this is kept simmering by the cycling of impulsive and chronic emotions which are identified with the kidneys, but literally the limbic system.
4. The situation must be brought under control. Therefore, there is a mandate to switch from the kidney variety of emotion over to the bowel variety of emotion.

Ephesians 4:31 - All bitterness, both operational anger and motivational anger, both brawling and slander, must be removed from all of you along with all evil.

Ephesians 4:32 - But become kind, performing gracious acts toward each other, with healthy intestines: compassionate ...

Compassion is expressed towards those who have wronged you in the sense that you are willing to overlook their indiscretions as being the source of ignorance of doctrine, an inability to manage the pressures in their life, or a bout with impulsive and chronic emotions. Your duty is not to join them in a war of kidneys but rather to maintain healthy intestines by showing compassion. When you do this, you are involved in executing through impersonal love the same longsuffering and lovingkindness exhibited by God toward us on a daily basis. And if we are going to show compassion towards those who wrong us then we may as well go all the way and forgive them for it too.