

THE COMPASSIONATE CHRIST.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

THERE is no place in which human sorrows are felt as they are felt in the heart of Jesus. No one knows human weakness as He knows it, or pities as He can pity. Every suffering of body is known to our sympathising Lord, and every grief that makes the heart ache. Human pity is often worn out from over-use. It impatiently mutters, "Is that poor creature here again? I have helped him a dozen times already." Or it says: "That miserable fellow has taken to drink again, has he? I am done trying to save him. He makes himself a brute; let him die like the brutes!" Human pity often gives way just when it should stand the heaviest strain.

Compassion dwells in the heart of Christ, as inexhaustable as the sunlight. Our tears hang heavier on that heart than the planets which His divine hand holds in their orbits; our sighs are more audible to His ear than the blasts of to-day's wintry wind are to us. When we pray aright, we are reaching up and taking hold on that compassion. The penitent publican was laying hold of it when he cried out of that broken heart, "Be merciful to me, a sinner!" It is His sublime pity that listens to our prayers and hears our cries and grants us what we want. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace and make our weakness, our guiltiness, and our griefs, to be their own pleas to Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

One of the most characteristic stories of Abraham Lincoln is that a poor soldier's wife came to the White House, with her infant in her arms, and asked admission to the President. She came to beg him to grant a pardon to her husband, who was under a military sentence. "Be sure and take the baby up with you," said the Irish porter at the White House door. At length the woman descended the stairway, weeping for joy; and the Irishman exclaimed, "Ah, mum, it was the baby that did it!"

So doth our weakness appeal to the compassionate heart of our Redeemer. There is no more exquisite description of Him than in this touch: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom; He shall gently lead those that are young." Such is our blessed Master's tender mercy to the weak. It is tender because it never breaks the bruised reed or quenches the feeblest spark.

This world of ours contains vastly more weak things than strong things. Here and there towers a mountain pine or stalwart oak; but the frail reeds and rushes are innumerable. Even in the Bible gallery of characters how few are strong; yea, none but had some weakness. Abraham's tongue is once twisted to a false-

hood; the temper of Moses is not always proof against provocation; Elijah loses heart under the juniper tree, and boastful Peter turns poltroon under the taunts of a servantmaid.

But evermore there waits and watches over us that infinite compassion that knows what is in poor man, and remembereth that we are but dust. For our want-book he has an infinitely larger supply-book. The same sympathising Jesus who raised the Jewish maiden from her bed of death, who rescued sinking Peter, and pitied a hungry multitude, and wept with the sisters of Bethany ere He raised the dead brother to life, is living yet. His love, as old Rutherford said, "hath neither brim nor bottom."

This compassionate Jesus ought to be living also in the persons of those whom He makes His representatives. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ." That law is love. This law of Christian sympathy works in two ways: it either helps our fellow-creatures get rid of their burdens, or if failing in that, it helps them to carry the load more lightly. We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Here, for example, is a strong, rich, well-manned church; some of its members are dying of dignity and others are debilitated with indolence. Yonder is a feeble church in numbers and in money. Let the man who counts one in the strong church go where he can count ten in the weak church. If the compassionate Christ should come into some of our city churches, I suspect that He would order more than one rich, well-fed member off his damask cushion, and send him to work in some mission school or struggling enterprise.

What does the Lord make some of His servants rich and strong for except that they may lend a helping hand to the weak? I wish we knew the name of the Good Samaritan; we might clap the word "Saint" to his name as soon as to Saint John or Saint Andrew. When he found the bleeding Jew by the roadside, he did not say "You fool! why did you come on this dangerous road alone and unarmed?" He picks up the wounded sufferer, and when he reaches the khan he slips the shilling into the innkeeper's hands, and whispers in his ear, "If thou spendest more on him, when I come this way again I will repay thee."

That early church was saturated with the spirit of their Lord. The fulfilled the "law of Christ." The only genuine successors of those apostles are the load lifters. The second coming of Christ in these days must be in the persons of those who bear the burdens of the weak, condescend to men of low estate, and seek out and save the lost. One great need of the times is for rich people and cultured people to understand their duty and do it; otherwise wealth and culture is a snare and a curse. Jesus Christ exerted His divine might and infinite love in bearing the load of man's sins and sorrows. Consecration means copying the compassionate Christ. Power means debt—the debt we owe to the poor, the feeble, the sick, the ignorant, the fallen, the guilty and the perishing. May God inspire us, and help us to pay that debt!