

Its Sham Compassion vs. the Dying Love of Christ

by Catherine Booth

The sermon warns against the dangers of modern benevolence, which often ignores the spiritual needs of individuals and focuses on physical needs, and instead calls for a return to the true Gospel of Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 10:28, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 16:19, John 15:13

Topics: "True Compassion", "Soul Salvation"

Description

Catherine Booth preaches about the dangers of false compassion and the importance of focusing on the salvation of souls above all else. She contrasts the shallow acts of benevolence that ignore the spiritual needs of humanity with the deep, sacrificial compassion of Jesus Christ, who prioritized the eternal well-being of individuals. Catherine emphasizes the necessity of addressing the soul's condition and the urgency of sharing the Gospel message, even if it involves uncomfortable truths about sin and judgment. She highlights Jesus' unwavering commitment to saving souls, His personal engagement with the needy, and His ultimate sacrifice on the cross as the epitome of true compassion and love.

Transcript

The Sham Compassion

Benevolence has come somewhat into fashion of late. It has become the correct thing to do the slums, since the Prince of Wales did them; and this general idea of caring in some way or degree for the poor and wretched has extended itself even into the region of creeds, so that we have now many schemes for the salvation of mankind without a real Saviour.

Do not misunderstand me. I have no objection -- nay, I rejoice in any real good being done for anybody, much more for the poor and suffering -- I have no objection that a large society of intelligent Christians should take up so noble an object as that of caring for stray dogs, providing it does not interfere with caring for stray babies! I desire not to find fault with what is good, but to point out the evil which, to my mind, so largely diminishes the satisfaction one would otherwise feel in much benevolent effort being put forth around us. As I said at the beginning, the most precious stone given instead of bread is useless to a starving man.

Surely nobody ever cared for poor suffering humanity so much as Jesus Christ. He gladly put forth his mighty power for the healing and feeding of the body, and he laid it down most distinctly that all who were true to Him must love the poor and give up their all for them in the same practical way in which He did; but all this real brotherhood did not prevent His keeping the great truths of salvation ever to the front, and applying them as relentlessly to the poor as to the rich, and vice versa.

But now in the name of Christ we are asked to believe either that the truest way to carry out His intentions is to ignore men's souls and care only for their bodies, or else to join with this sort of material salvation some theory that will practically get rid of all serious soul-need.

The First Scheme

The First Scheme of salvation without a Christ provides for attention to all the needs of the body, ignoring the soul.

This system has not only become more popular in many Christian circles than any of Christ's teachings, but some of its advocates actually go so far as to place it in favorable contrast with any spiritual ' work whatsoever, thus plainly intimating that those who really have the spirit of Christ show it better by devotion to these so-called practical ends than by what are assumed to be the less practical efforts which have regard to the world to come. This religion of bodily compassion may almost be said to have many sects devoted to it, each having its own favorite theory.

First, we have the educationalists.

These almost abandon the existing generation, but are confident of the results of their labors upon the coming one, such results being conveniently remote. But whether in connection with week-day or Sunday schools, this plan has had at least the trial of one generation, with extremely bad results so far as we can judge. What a mockery of mankind to suppose or to teach that mere information can satisfy its wants, when the more information men get, the more clearly we see the reign of evil in the world, and the hopelessness of attaining to righteousness, so far as human power is concerned. Yet, strange to say, the efforts of an enormous proportion of the mission agencies at work are directly devoted to education, and the ablest heathen in the world today are those who have been carefully instructed in missionary institutions, and have used their education to obtain higher positions and greater influence in the world, with which they now the better withstand the gospel of Christ.

Many of the more sensible Christians, perceiving how little ordinary education can do for the toiling masses, devote their attention to mechanical education, hoping to raise the position and prospects of the working classes by teaching them how to put a better finish on their daily tasks, although it is notorious that the cleverest of workmen are frequently the greatest drunkards and the most miserable of men.

Second on this list, for the regeneration of society, we have the house-builders. These are afflicted, and rightly so, with the overcrowded condition of working-class dwellings, and consider that all will be well when the people are better housed, shutting their eyes to the condition of multitudes who may be seen today living in the greatest sin and misery in well-built modern dwellings. Certainly it is a shameful scandal on those Christian landlords who keep their tenants in buildings unfit for dogs; but, after all, not so much more shameful than the conduct of those who, although aroused to the frightful condition of the masses, deliberately attempt their improvement on the same principles as if they were cattle, mainly by means of buildings which pay a liberal interest. No one could possibly be more thankful than I should to see the

compassion which has of late found such loud expression in words, embodied in some practical scheme for the provision of comfortable, wholesome houses for the poor, at such rental as they could comfortably pay; but to provide this, with land under our present iniquitous system, will require a benevolence willing to "lend, hoping for nothing again."

Thirdly: Next comes the total abstinence plan for the salvation of the people.

Amongst those who devote themselves to this sphere of labor there are some of whom I would speak with the greatest respect, namely, those who perceive that in all these outward things there is no remedy without some radical internal change. The majority, however, observing that drink has more than anything else contributed to the degradation of the people, concentrate their efforts upon their deliverance from this one evil -- unquestionably a great temporal good -- but we have only to look across the channel to see abundant evidence that the people may be almost clear of drunkenness without being, for that reason, any nearer to God or true happiness. To soberize without saving can only be compared to the action of a set of people who should with heroic effort drag drowning men ashore, and then leave them lying all unconscious within reach of the waves.

Fourthly: Another scheme of temporal salvation may be represented as rescuing work.

There are benevolent efforts of many kinds put forth for the rescue of various classes of fallen or endangered people from their several perils, without a thought of placing them in spiritual safety. I am not speaking with the least desire to depreciate any of these efforts; but what I would point out is, that while Christ held up for condemnation the priest who haughtily passed by the poor victim, He no less held up to condemnation the Levite who deliberately looked at his necessities and yet passed on. I desire to give every credit for true kindly feeling on behalf of the fallen or suffering; but it seems to me unaccountable that intelligent beings should look upon any form of human ruin without realizing that something must be done within, as well as without, in order to produce any lasting change for the better.

Fifthly: Another plan of temporal salvation is the providing for needy children.

This is one of the most favorite hobbies of benevolent people, and properly so, if it were only carried out in the right way. But how astounding, that people professing to revere and follow Christ should be capable of entertaining any schemes which undertake the guardianship of children, and yet which ignore their spiritual necessities; which train and teach them how to get on in the world without God. Alas I know from personal experience and actual contact with some of the children turned out of orphan asylums of high reputation in Christian circles, that, so far as any real living acquaintance with the things of God, or any practical carrying out of the teachings of Jesus Christ, are concerned, they might as well have been brought up amongst infidels; and I am by no means alone in this opinion.

I have reason to believe, that in many such instances, nothing would be more highly resented than any attempt to make such children realize the willingness and sufficiency of a personal living Saviour to renew their hearts and to enable them to walk in obedience to His will, and to keep themselves "unspotted from the world." Dry conventional dogmas and ceremonies constitute the only notion that thousands of such children have of the religion of Jesus Christ; and no wonder, considering the specimens they have had exhibited to them in the conduct of many of those to whom their poor little lives and hearts have been committed.

I have many times said what I here deliberately repeat, that if I were dying and leaving a family of helpless children, I would leave it as my last request that they might be divided -- one here, and another there -- amongst any poor, but really godly, families who would receive them, rather than they should be got into the most highly trumpeted orphanage with which I am acquainted; for I should infinitely prefer that their bodies should lack necessary food and attention, rather than that their poor little hearts and souls should be crushed and famished for want of love, both human and Divine.

Children brought up without love are like plants brought up without the sun. I would suggest to some of you ladies who may be on committees, or who might possibly get on to them, that you would be doing God and humanity good service by visiting these institutions, not on specified days, but at unthought of hours or seasons; for instance, get up a little earlier and go and insist on joining the children at their breakfast table. On other occasions, demand admission to the schoolroom, and observe the countenance and manner of those paid to instruct these children; in short, observe the deportment of paid servants of the institution all the way through.

A still better way, by-the-by, of following your Saviour and serving your generation, would be to take some such children yourselves and bring them up with all the love and care with which you bring up your own, or would have done so had God granted you the privilege. It will be a happy day for England when Christian ladies transfer their sympathies from poodles and terriers to destitute and starving children!

Sixth. Another scheme, perhaps the lowest of these material systems of salvation, is the feeding system.

I mean that system in which large sums of money are spent merely upon providing some special feast for those who are well known to be, as a rule, almost without food. Now, I think you will all believe me when I say that I rejoice in every bite or sup provided for the needy, but I cannot help seeing how monstrously all this exhibits the recklessness of the Christian world as to the greater needs of the perishing. Some of the most intelligent and highly placed people in the country may be seen looking complacently on upon the ragged, hungry crowd, who are eagerly devouring the only good meal perhaps which they have had for a twelvemonth, or which is likely to be within their reach for as long again, looking on without apparently having their sense of satisfaction in the slightest degree ruffled by the thought (if such people ever do think) about the lives which these "poor creatures" live during the other 36d days of the year! Such observers do not seem to look behind the staring eyes and hollow cheeks and savage ferocity of the eaters. The starving hunger, the devilish dispositions and abject despair of the "man inside" does not seem to trouble them.

Now, what I want to impress upon you is, not that these bodily wants are unworthy of the attention bestowed upon them, -- for I regard it as a crying shame that such wants should not have a thousand times more attention, and in a thousand times more comprehensive fashion than they at present receive, but what I complain of is, the attempt to substitute any or all of these for a thorough work in the heart; and when such "charity" is carried out on the long pole system, and yet paraded in the name of Christ, I regard it as rather an insult than a credit to His name. It seems to me that the Popular Christianity which would put these things in the place of the Gospel is only another of the clever shams of the devil by which to ruin our race, and to turn aside God's people to broken cisterns, only insuring a more eternal weight of misery at the cost of a little present relief.

Oh, friends, you who have health, talent, and means, make up your minds on which side you will act. Remember that in the light of that judgment which is coming on, it will appear worse than useless to have

expended your energies and powers on doing that kind of good which will NOT LAST, which will, in fact, by itself, serve the enemies purpose rather than otherwise. Either do as Christ commands you, or cease to call your work by His name. Do not let any one delude you with the idea that you are following Christ, or doing that work which is peculiarly His, in contradistinction to all merely human benevolence and earthly salvation, unless you are seeking first His kingdom, both within your own soul and every one else's.

The Second Scheme

The second of these schemes of salvation without a Saviour is even worse than that which I have already described; for while that tended to turn the thoughts of men from the world to come to some good or advantage of a temporal kind, this would lay a degrading hand upon eternity itself, and, under pretense of elevating humanity, would push it into a future life with its deepest intuitions all scorched up, and its highest aspirations disappointed and blighted.

Here, again, are to be found various sects, etc.

First comes universalism. This theory would make men into mere puppets, who for the time being are allowed to be the prey of an evil power, but after a certain amount of suffering are to be picked up by a better power. Like some unhappy country whose patriotic force has been crushed out of it until it has become the helpless prize, first of one monarch and then of another, so the kingdom of the human soul is to pass from evil to good and from Satan to God.

The blackest wretch on earth, who has made his home a hell, and spread moral ruin as widely as he could reach, is, according to this theory, to be saved even as the purest saint; for "all men" are to be saved -by repentance and a holy life, if they choose; if not, still they are to be saved -- by their own free will, if they have fixed their affections on things above; but if, on the other hand, they have loved sin and vice, and committed all the catalogue of crimes, still salvation is to come out of devilry, and a clean thing out of an unclean. To try to make men believe in such a system seems to me to be no less insulting to their understandings than it is shocking to their consciences, and defiant of the plainest teachings of Scripture common sense and analogy.

The extent of our present knowledge with respect to a better world is that it is the abode of those "who have overcome" evil. Its songs are of victory! Its inhabitants renounced the mark of the beast on earth, washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, kept the commandments of God, and through much tribulation were faithful unto death. To this assemblage of crowned victors, the universalist would introduce the man who, while on earth, overcame not evil but good, who was victorious, not over his own passions, the temptations of the devil, and the forces of evil around him, but over the dictates of his own conscience, the influences and agencies which God put in operation in order to save him, and over all the forces of righteousness with which he came in contact. Strange mercy! to send a man like this to a heaven where every song would remind him of defeat and degradation, and every crown and psalm make conspicuous his false and ignominious position. Strange justice also which gives the prize to him who never won it, nay, who despised the conditions of the contest, and refused to enter the lists!

Second in this scheme comes what I shall designate as the all love theory.

The propounders of this theory, without daring actually to contest the great facts of revelation, would have us be silent about the most serious of them, lest we should shock the people. They tell us gravely that men will be "repelled from the Gospel," if its truth about judgment and hell are not kept in the background; tell,

say they, about the Father's love, but do not talk about "damnation " and "the wrath to come." Strange mercy this, to let men perish rather than tell them that sin breeds a hell from which none can deliver them. What should we think of a father too merciful to tell us the truth? Should we not say he was cruel? The child playing on the hearth-rug might well complain if you will not tell him that fire burns, because, forsooth, he might think you cruel to have it there, and so you leave him to find it out by falling in! "Hush, do not frighten the people; "Sing to them, talk sweetly to them; there are no modern words for hell and such-like horrors. In ancient days there were prophets, whose fiery warnings of judgment to come led whole nations to repentance, but men think they know better now The God who sent those poor old fanatics to speak plain words of wrath and denunciation is not their God. His words of burning reproof and fearful threatening is not their burden. Their message is some "sweet text" tied to a bunch of flowers; their burden can be given by "Saturday evenings for the people," where "comic readings," "gymnastics," "secular music by the choir" are the converting measures deemed most suitable. Alas! alas! such maudlin souls are not worthy to deal with the things of eternity! Who wants in the hospital a man too "tender" to probe the wound, too "merciful " to amputate the mortifying limb, too "loving" to say with firmness, Do this, bear this, or die? Away with such a sentimental surgeon, you would cry; send him to pick rose leaves, where his feeble hands will do no mischief. And yet these over-merciful friends I am talking about would spiritually elevate the masses by twaddling to them in their sins and rebellion, about love, and sweetness, and peace, when, if they did not shut their ears, and were willing to catch the sound, they would hear the thundering echoes from every sinner's conscience, "There is no peace to the wicked;" "Wrath to come, wrath to come!"

Third. Next in this catalogue of modern salvations comes the theory of doubt.

These doubters, while manifestly very shaky as to their own theory, argue that all is "too uncertain for us to speak positively as to eternity." As we have before noted, their scheme for elevating men is to teach know-nothingness. They seem to think that doubt in itself is something very ennobling, that is, in things spiritual, for in things temporal they have faith enough, and also exact it from others. They claim explicit trust in their business relations, perfect confidence in their domestic lives, but appear to think that to doubt the great God and His revelation will somehow prove a great blessing and benefit to mankind; "as to eternal things it is not seemly to speak positively."

In yonder back street, ah, even in the worst dens of vice, are found men who have in the depths of their sinful hearts some hidden memory, which is the link of holy things. Perhaps they have stood when boys by the dying bed of some humble believing father, who declared in his last hours that he knew whom he had believed; or perhaps, even in the later and blacker days of their lives, they have seen a little one go from their own dark homes with a heavenly smile upon its face, and the words, "Jesus has come to fetch me," on its lips; and these men believe without a doubt in the God who, somehow, made their fathers and their children know Him, and some day they mean to turn to Him; but the chains of an evil life are holding them down with the "masses" of desperate and dangerous sinners around them. To these the modern scheme comes with its new light, and lays its withering touch on these memories of good. "We cannot know," it says; "women may have dreamt, and children believed, old men may have had their sick fancies, but it is better to be without that which is delusive the only certain thing is that all is uncertain, the manly thing is to doubt."

Ah! rich man, you may sit in your palace-like home, where nothing unpleasant is now allowed to enter, and it may seem little loss to you, so far, that your belief in eternal things has been loosened; but to the poor man in his bare life, and to the man who is bound by some sinful chain of vice, and whose earthly career

has not another gleam of hope, it becomes the final stroke of misery and degradation to make him think that he cannot know with any certainty any better things than those which now surround him. If there is not anywhere in the universe a Saviour's hand, whose clasp he may yet feel, and on whose strength he may depend to draw him up out of his drunken jail-bird existence to something purer and better, some day, when he shall have made up his mind to be saved, then his one door of hope is closed, and he realizes, with a bitterness which will drown itself in fresh outbursts of sin and villainy, that there is no true light or guide anywhere for anybody. Granted that the one guide is untrustworthy, the one beacon light possibly false, he is out on the sea of life without a spark of hope or cheer. Shipwreck and eternal ruin may be the next event at any hour.

Fourth. "The Christian free-thinkers" next claim our attention.

These are bolder than the latter class, denying whatever seems to them to be objectionable in the Scriptures. The inspiration of the Bible is to them on a level with that of Shakespeare or Homer, and for anything they do not like they have a free rendering, or a cool excision. They would take away what they fancy to be stumbling-blocks in the path of men, without stopping to consider whether God Himself placed them there as guiding-posts. Ah, what contempt such men would feel for the word "free," if it were applied in other ways. Who would tolerate the "free" soldier, who set up his own notions as to military matters, and at the critical hour of the fight was found obeying and leading others to obey orders which had been altered by the omission of all which he considered objectionable! Who would for long be retained in her Majesty's household who should presume to alter the rules of court behavior, and to expunge what he deemed irksome? And yet the revelation which is to train servants for the eternal household of the King of kings, and the laws laid down by the Lord of hosts, by which His battles are to be fought, may be treated with a free hand, and tinkered and paired -- obeyed or disobeyed -- according to the notions of men who love their own will better than anything else in heaven or on earth! Alas, I fear it may be said of these doubters that "while they promise men liberty, they themselves are servants to corruption," and I would remind them "how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not."

We might go on to multiply these modern schemes for the improvement and elevation of man, for they are legion, and some of them doubtless propounded by those who have much real concern and compassion for the multitudes, but which all the more, because there is so much of good in them, are the most dangerous and ruinous to the highest interests of mankind.

Take away from the way-faring man the absolute certainty which he feels about the truth of the gospel, and where do you leave him? Wretched and hopeless in the very center of his being; You may have fed his body, you may have clothed and housed him, you may have educated his children, you may have nursed him in sickness and comforted him in sorrow; but for all this he is left on the moors to wander and die in desolation and darkness, in spite of all your feeding and all your loving rush-lights.

This sort of compassion is the most cruel ignis fatuus the devil ever invented. Depend upon it, you cannot be more merciful than Jesus, who says today to you and to all men, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Dying Love of Christ

We propose now to consider in juxtaposition with all these modern schemes for the elevation of mankind, on which we have been remarking, that one which is universally admitted to be the model scheme; the

ideal of all that is lovely, tender, ennobling, and comprehensive.

The scheme of Christ, with its aims and modes, as shown in the story of His life-compassion for the world. I contend that the compassion of Jesus stands out distinguished as of another kind from all the philanthropic plans which we have been considering.

First: By its clear perception of the worst feature of man's condition.

No doubt the Saviour's heart ached in sympathy with the mass of human sorrow, sickness, and poverty brought before Him. Where we have only a glimpse of men's troubles as we move hurriedly up and down among them, He had the whole sad story unfolded to Him, and His keen love responded tenderly to every cry for help. Nevertheless, He was never diverted from the great central danger. To Him the sorrowful troubled crowd were not merely poor and suffering, not merely oppressed by unjust laws, and crowded into badly constructed dwellings, -- not merely hungry, hard-worked, and comfortless; these were incidents which He sometimes alleviated and more often shared, but the crowning peril, the absolutely certain woe which eclipsed, in His sight, every other, was the loss of the soul. He flings aside contemptuously the thought that living well in this world was a real benefit. The fool of all the world, the man who in His opinion stood in most awful risk, is drawn by Him in a parable sketch which is little dwelt on in these days. This fool in Christ's picture was the rich man with bursting barns and "so much goods" that he knew not how to dispose of them. He was a man who had been elevated by education enough, at any rate, to enable him to do a good business; he enjoyed the benefits of a good dwelling, good food, and, doubtless, the best society within his reach; and yet he was a fool, and Christ holds him up as the last sample of such, simply because he left his soul in jeopardy.

Again, Christ draws another picture, blacker and more awful yet, and again He selects the rich man (the very man, remember, who had enjoyed the best of this world's benefits and who also was kind to the poor Lazarus), and yet Christ draws aside the veil of the future world, and shows where earthly elevation landed him.

"The rich man died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And He cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from thence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

What! could it be Christ who talked about a man in fire, a man crying for a drop of water, and denied even the small boon! Could it be Christ who talked about torment, and showed this vision of despair; the tender, loving, merciful Christ! Ah, He showed it, because He SAW IT; because this was the real danger, from which He had come to deliver! Because He knew that the sick beggar, covered with undressed wounds, and with scarce an alleviating circumstance to assuage his sufferings, might have the eternal compensation which should make his earthly troubles seem like a dream, if only his soul were right, if only he were "rich towards God." Christ showed this, because it was the one thing which no one else saw. The human needs of men were apparent enough to many benevolent people in His day, including the rich giver who was going to hell, but the crying soul needs, which had brought him out of heaven, the hopeless woe to which even the rich and happy were drifting -- the undying worm, the quenchless fire, were the

visions of sorrow which He only saw, and which His tenderest compassion betrayed itself in seeking to relieve. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose His own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" may be taken as indicating the foundation principle of His entire scheme of redemption.

Second: Christ's compassion is distinguished from all other compassions by its plain, cutting, personal dealing.

"He would eat with sinners," talk familiarly and tenderly with the worst on the earth, and lay His hands upon the most loathsome, but He was incapable of dealing lightly with their sin.

Imagine Christ giving an entertainment, and spending the evening in frivolous talk, in order that He might humor sinners and attract them to Himself! Imagine Him allowing His little band of disciples to sing current songs and read "amusing selections" for a couple of hours at a time to keep people out of worse company! No, He was too tenderly compassionate for souls, who He knew might end their time on earth at any moment, thus to fool away His chance. He never lost an opportunity of talking straight to them about their sins, the interests of their souls, and the claims of His Father's law. The young ruler comes to Him, and he is so lovable, so moral, so good, might he not have been allowed to join the little band of disciples, and to have gained light gradually? "Yet lackest thou one thing" was pronounced all the more clearly because "he loved him." "Sell that thou hast, and follow Me" rang out all the more distinctly because He could offer treasures for the soul.

The compassion of Jesus was not of the maudlin kind which leaves men their "little indulgences," and shrinks from being "too hard" on them, where hardness is the indispensable condition of salvation. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," He mercilessly prescribes; better, He decides, be maimed and suffering here, than be cast into "eternal fire."

As to the religious ideas of His day, He walked straight across them with a cutting "Woe unto you!" Woe! woe! was the one cry with which He met the teachers and professors of His time, provoking their bitterest hate and animosity. "Making clean the outside platter, while within are dead men's bones," was His short description of them and their doings. He upset the nice little fashions which had sprung up around the temple worship with a whip of cords. "Publicans and harlots shall enter the kingdom before you," He told the grand professors who listened to Him. He inflicted the faithful wounds of a friend, in order that He might awaken them to their danger and lead them to seek the only remedy.

Third: Christ's compassion was in direct contrast with all mere human benevolence in its "other worldliness."

No one will dispute that He possessed the power to elevate the masses in a temporal sense, by bestowing on them all those benefits at which modern philanthropy aims. He could have fed them by a miracle every day, as easily as on the two occasions when he multiplied the bread; and who could have lectured on science, or history, or invention, so clearly, so perfectly, as He to whom all knowledge must be as an open book? He could have brought into His services those twelve legions of angels, and taken an earthly kingdom, from which He could have dispensed wealth and prosperity to all around; but He indicated his scheme for elevating and saving people when He said "I am the way" -- to another sphere, another realm, not of earthly good, but of heavenly. When He was asked for the posts of honor in His kingdom, He made it clear that he was leading to another and higher world through a "baptism" and with a "cup" of suffering and poverty in this.

Fourth: Christ's compassion stands out in its spiritual fellowship.

The King of kings makes eternal friends of the fishermen. "He did not visit the poor," "He did not elevate their sad lot," and walk on in His own high path, having His fellowship, His joys, His sorrows apart from them; but He shared His life with them in a holy comradeship. He did not live in the style and companionship of the worldly Pharisee, and occasionally visit Peter, James, and John, and hold meetings for the working classes; no, He lived with them and became education, elevation, salvation, and all to them by His blessed fellowship. "Ye are my friends," said He, and "all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." His heart had no reserves from these men. John's head could lean on His breast, and Mary could sit at His feet, with the consciousness that they were taken into His confidence, and were indeed as brethren.

That they could not always understand Him was their fault, not His; but their slowness and dullness never wearied His compassion, nor caused Him to seek friends elsewhere. He called His three fishermen to Him when He was about to put forth any wonderful exercise of power. He wanted Peter, James, and John, when He was raising the dead, and took them to share His joy on the mount of transfiguration. He craved for their presence in His last agony, and desired no better provision for His mother, when He hung upon the Cross, than the home that one of them could afford.

Fifth: The Compassion of Jesus is yet further distinguished by its Divine faith, and hope, and action.

He had faith in the possibilities of these people, which possibilities would not have been very apparent to any other eye. He believed in the transforming power of the Spirit which He could send them. His hope was not chilled by stupidity, or foolishness, or non-comprehension on the part of disciples or outsiders. Mighty compassion must that have been that Could live thirty years on such terms with such men, and never falter or turn back. Many a fine scheme of modern benevolence dies and goes out when the people who are to be benefited get to be known! "Such wretches," "so ungrateful," "so presuming," "so hopeless." But Christ hoped all things, believed all things, until the Peter who was afraid of a servant girl stood triumphant before the three thousand converts. Christ kept His little band together, although He knew there was a traitor amongst them, -- the traitor who would betray Him, and sell Him for money into the hands of His enemies. Christ forbore and worked with John until the man who wanted fire from heaven to burn up sinners became the apostle of love. Christ made the Samaritan harlot woman into His ambassador on the spot; Christ made sound men of the lepers, and sane divines of the mad. He called the devils out of those whom they tormented, and then let loose the whole strange flock of ex-harlots, maniacs, and lepers, to tell His praises and to gather others to His presence. Christ went up to Calvary undismayed by His perfect knowledge of sinful, perverse, opposing men, to die for the whole ungrateful race. Christ hoped and believed in His own blackest hour for the dying blackguard at His side, and saved him as he hung there. Talk about "eternal hope!" Is not this the eternal hope which saves to the uttermost now and here?

Sixth: The compassion of Jesus is further distinguished by His ever going straight to the one end.

The whole work of Christ was aimed at the salvation of men's souls. And this is not the less true because He also benefited their bodies by healing their diseases and sympathizing with their sorrows.

This latter side of His work is much dwelt upon in these days, and yet it was a merely incidental part. If He had come to remove earthly suffering, poverty, oppression, and distress, He would, as -- I have pointed out, certainly have gone about it in a different way. He would have aimed at riches and position and ease,

in order that He might have shared them with His own chosen ones. He would have sought to build up an earthly kingdom, where men should neither hunger nor thirst, nor be sick, nor die; and it would have been a far easier task than the founding of that new invisible kingdom which we have already tried to describe, where only the spiritual and eternal should be of much importance. In comparison, how much easier to have drawn crowds if He had always given them their dinner, than to hold followers who should enter into the mysterious doctrine, "I am the Bread of life;" "Ye must be born again!"

But He did feed the multitudes, and He did heal the sick! Yes, but He gave up the former when He found that they followed Him for that only, and His acts of healing were flashes of the Divine power within Him, rather than the "work given Him to do." "I came to call sinners to repentance," "I am come to set the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." "I came to bring fire on earth." "I came not to send peace, but a sword." These sayings, and multitudes of others, were descriptive of a spiritual mission, and yet He was most tender, as we readily trace, to every suffering, needy creature who came in contact with Him. His pity was boundless for the lame, the blind, and the deaf, and His loving heart must have grieved over much in the sea of human misery brought before Him, of which we never hear. The truest love must ever seek the highest good of its object, sometimes even with forgetfulness of important lesser advantages. He gave the great rule by which His compassion for men's necessities was guided, when He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all other things shall be added unto you."

Seventh: The compassion of Jesus stands out in contrast with all other in its devotion unto death.

He was too merciful to men to spare them the bitter truths of hell, or to conceal from them the punishments due to transgression; but on Himself He had no compassion.

If the penalty were indeed so awful, He would share it. He too would bear the curse, the shame, the agony of dying for sin, so far as could for the sinless One be possible.

How brightly this compassion shines out against that of many who profess so much for the suffering and the lost. Watch the people who talk the most loudly of their tenderness, and will not say one word of the "outer darkness" and the hell fire of which He said so much. Where is there, any dying love amongst them? Where are their Calvarys? Are they remarkable for cross-bearing? Are they noted for self-denial, or is it in word only, and not in deed, that they are more compassionate than Jesus? They do not like to repeat to the poor His terrible words of warning. May it not be because they are unwilling to act toward the poor as He did?

No rough living, no fishermen friends, no hungry, weary days, no homeless nights, no persecution and contempt above all, no scourge, no crown of thorns, no march up to Golgotha, no nailing to the cross, no agony, no dying for the salvation of men! There can be no other dying love than that which causes the real dying. Do settle that in your minds, for without a dying, a real, complete, and eternal separation between your old self and the new self, which means to live and die for others, you cannot be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, or an eternal benefactor to your race. You may not come to any such terrible end as your Master did, for as a rule in outward things the servant is above his Lord, but in some way or another you are doubtless called to follow Him in a path full of suffering and self-denial, in a road of shame in which you will find yourself completely cut off, alas, from the rest of mankind; but without this daily dying, this true following of Him, do not expect to be able to do any lasting good to those who are perishing around you.

Let no benevolent projects, no magnificent phrases deceive you. The good done to mankind by the poor fishermen who spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, has surpassed all the achievements of modern philanthropy as far as the noon-day sun surpasses the rush-light.

If you want to elevate the masses, go and ask HIM how to do it, and if the answer comes, "Take up thy cross and follow Me," OBEY.

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