

CHRIST TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, &c.—HEB. IV. 15.

THE apostle's design, in this epistle, is to establish the Hebrews who professed Christ in that profession; so as they should neither quit it, nor abate anything of it, for the love of the Mosaical rites, or fear of persecution.

In order to that end he displays before them the excellencies of Christ, and shews how far he transcends the angels, chap. i. 2; how far Moses, chap. iii.; how far the high priest. Afterwards he enters upon the comparison betwixt Christ and the high priest, chap. iv. ver. 14. He proposes his main design, that which he pursues all along.

Let us hold fast. Let us neither quite relinquish it, nor hold it loose, by lukewarmness or indifferency, remitting anything of our zeal and stedfastness therein: since there is more encouragement to stick to this, than the former legal administration; since we have a greater high priest, and one from whom we may expect far greater advantages.

He calls Christ a *high priest*, because he did that really which the legal high priest did typically. He makes reconciliation, and he makes intercession for the people.

He calls him a *great* high priest, insinuating that the other high priesthood was little, and of small value, in comparison of Christ's. What Aaron and his successors did but in figure and shadow, Christ does really and effectually; whatever they did by sacrifice, or interceding for the people, had no virtue or efficacy, but what depended on, and was derived from, the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, the great high priest indeed.

He says, he is 'passed into the heavens;' intimating, that what he does there, is as far to be preferred before what the high priest did in the most holy place, as heaven is above earth, or that lower tabernacle or temple on earth. The high priest, on the day of expiation, after he had offered sacrifice, took the blood of it, and with it passed into the most holy place; this was but a shadow of what Christ did, and is now doing for us. After he had offered himself a sacrifice on earth, he, with the virtue of his blood,

is passed into the heavens, there to carry on and accomplish the remainder of his office, as he is our great high priest.

And so he calls him Jesus a Saviour; one who, by virtue of his office, and his executing of it in earth and heaven, can save his people from their sins, which the other high priest could not do.

He calls him 'the Son of God.' He was not a mere man, as the other high priest, but God as well as man. The Son of God, not for his conception, or unction, or resurrection, or exaltation; but his Son by eternal generation; being begotten of the substance of the Father, and so of the same nature and essence with him. Equal in power, glory, and all excellencies; and therefore a perfect and all-sufficient Saviour, 'able to save to the uttermost all that come,' &c. And hereby in such a height of exaltation, as the other high priest cannot come into any competition with him in the least wise. Yea, one who is not only able, but willing, to save; being not only the all-glorious, almighty, and all-sufficient God, but also gracious, merciful, and compassionate: 'For we have not,' ver. 15.

We need not to be discouraged that we have an high priest that is so transcendently excellent; who is so great, as there was none in the world ever like him; who is so far beyond us, so remote from us, passed into the heavens, yea, higher than the heavens; who is infinitely above us, being the Son of God, when we are but the children of men, dust and ashes. Since, as he is great, and high, and glorious, he is also gracious, merciful, and compassionate; no weakness of ours, wherein he does not shew himself so: 'For we have not,' &c.

Obs. Christ our high priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

For the explaining of this let me shew, 1, what it is to be our high priest; 2, what those infirmities are, with the feeling of which he is touched; 3, what it is to be touched with the feeling of them.

1. For the first, his office, as high priest, may be best known by the acts of it. The acts of his office are principally two.

(1.) Sacrificing for us to make reconciliation, chap. ii. 17. Reconciliation was made by offering sacrifice; this the high priest did under the law, chap. v. 1. Thus did Christ, our high priest, he offered sacrifice for sin, for the expiating and removing the guilt of it. A 'better sacrifice,' chap. ix. 23; a wonderful sacrifice, Isa. liii. 'His soul;' yea, soul and body, himself, chap. ix. 14, 26.

(2.) By interceding. The typical high priest, on the day of expiation, after he had offered the appointed sacrifice, took the blood of it with him into the most holy place, and there, burning incense withal, sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. 14.

Heb. ix. 7, 25, Thus the high priest under the law appeared for the people; and this was a shadow of Christ's interceding in heaven for us, chap. ix. 12, xi. 24.

He appears for us in our nature: as one who has shed his blood to expiate and cleanse us. The virtue of that blood is as fresh as if it were there poured out and presented, it cries.

And he appears as one whose will and desire it is, that all the advantages of his purchase may be bestowed on his people. This is more than if, as man, he should offer up strong cries with tears, as he did, chap. v. 7. Thus he intercedes, chap. vii. 26, and acts as our high priest, ver. 26.

2. What those infirmities are, with the feeling of which he is touched.

Infirmities here, are whatever our weak and frail condition makes us subject to suffer by. The apostle takes infirmities in this latitude, 2 Cor., latter part of the xi. and the former part of the xii. chapter, comprising his

wants, weaknesses, inward and outward; his perils and dangers, his temptations and trials, his afflictions and sufferings, under the notion of infirmities.

All that our Lord Jesus, taking our frail nature upon him, was exposed to, or exercised with; particularly, either such as concern the outward man, as want, or poverty, hunger, cold, nakedness, weariness, *vide* 2 Cor. xi. 27; also pain, sickness, or death itself. Not only such as are natural, but adventitious, through the injustice, cruelty, or other sin of men; as contempt, disgrace, reproach, slander, hatred, opposition, exile, imprisonment; or that which sometimes more troubles us, the unkindness, unfaithfulness, unaffectionateness, desertion of friends and relations.

Or, 2, such as concern the soul, viz. grief and anguish, trouble and perplexity, fear and terror, spiritual desertion, sense of God's displeasure or wrath, temptations from Satan, and horrid suggestions. All these, and such like, we may understand by infirmities. All these in a manner was Christ exercised with, or exposed to; and he is touched with the feeling of all and every of these, when his people are under them. But,

8. What is it to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities? The word is *συμπαθήσαι*, which signifies to condole with one, or to suffer with him. As one member is in pain or distress, the other members suffer with it, which the apostle expresseth by the same word, 1 Cor. xii. 26.

But this requires a more distinct and particular account. Take it thus,

(1.) He knows all our infirmities. He knows them actually, he sees them. He knows them all, none of them escape his notice. There is none of them so small, as that he should think them not worth his notice. None of them so great, as that he will be loath to concern himself therein. That is true still which David speaks of the Lord, before our nature was assumed, Ps. lvi. 8. All his troublesome motions, when he was forced from home, and in a sad wandering condition, the Lord took a particular account of it; he had them in numeration, as we have things which we count or tell one by one. We may think our afflictive infirmities more than we can number; but he counts them exactly, and has the account always in his eye. He takes not less notice of them, since he took our natures and infirmities, than he did before. As he is God, he is no less able. As he is man, we cannot imagine him less willing to do it; he is now doubly willing, both as he is God and man too.

(2.) He knows them experimentally. For he has tried what they are, he has himself been exercised with them. For *tempted*, in the latter end of this verse, some copies have *πειρασμένον*. He found by experience what they are, Mat. vii. 18. He took our infirmities, and bare them; and so knows how heavy they are by his own feeling. He knows what weight, or smart, or trouble, or afflictiveness there is in any of our infirmities, for he himself hath felt it all; he himself was under, and perfectly remembers what he suffered by it, and so he knows feelingly and to the life what we suffer by any of them. He does not only know what it is to be poor, in want and necessities, as one who having always lived in plenty himself, has an account of the poor and necessitous condition of others, but he himself was poor, 2 Cor. viii. 9.

He knows by experience what it is to be in such necessities, as not to have whereon to ride, whereon to feed, whereon to lay his head, Mat. viii. 20.

He knows what it is to be in pain, not only as one who having been at ease all his days, hears but others complain of it, but as one who himself has felt it, and that in extremity.

He knows what it is to be despised and set at nought, to be abused and

reproached, to be hated, and persecuted, and despitefully used. He knows the sorrows of life, and the pangs of death ; not as the angels know them, by sufferings of others, but by his own experience, as one that has suffered all these himself.

He knows what it is to be tempted to sin, troubled with horrid suggestions from Satan ; what it is to be deserted of friends, of all men ; yea, what it is (as to sense) to be forsaken of God. For this was his own case, he himself was thus tempted and tried, thus deserted and forsaken. All his disciples forsook him and fled ; yea, the sense of his Father's love was withdrawn from him, when he cried out, ' My God,' &c. He knows all this by his own sense and suffering ; he knows how grievous and afflictive this is, and what pity it calls for, and what succour and relief it stands in need of. He became like us in all these, that he might know this by experience, as chap. ii. 17, 18.

(8.) He is affected with our infirmities, he feels them, he is touched with the feeling of them. He has a sense thereof which touches his soul, and makes some impression on it ; as one who not only has suffered what others feel, but suffers with them in what they feel. As when one member is under some grievance, not only the other members suffer with it, but the soul is affected therewith ; affected with grief arising out of love, attended with desire to give or get relief, and anger and indignation against that which brought the grievance, or continues it, and hinders relief. In like manner is Christ affected with the infirmities of his people.

[1.] He pities, has compassion on them. This the word here used signifies, and may be read thus, We have not an high priest which cannot have compassion, &c. The same word is used, Heb. x. 34. Though they were not in bonds with the apostle, yet they suffered with him, being touched with a compassionate sense of his sufferings and bonds, as if they had been bound with him. So, though Christ labour not under these infirmities, as once he did, yet he is not without sense thereof ; it touches his soul, so that he does *συμπάθησαι*, suffer with us therein, having a compassionate sense of what we thereby suffer.

[2.] And this pity and compassion, it is not without the motions and acts of love. Indeed, this is the rise of it. It is out of such a love as made him willing to humble himself so low as to take our weaknesses and infirmities upon him. He would know what they were, and what it was to labour under them, by his own feeling and experience, that he might know the better how to pity those that are encompassed with them. He would in all things, in all soul-infirmities, be made like to us, that he might be, with more advantage, a merciful, a compassionate high priest, chap. ii. 17, 18. This was out of a wonderful and astonishing love ; this fitted him for compassionateness, and excites it.

[3.] This is attended with desire, accompanied with an inclination to succour, relieve such, whose condition is to be pitied ; to do that which is best for them in such a condition. That which wants this is no pity indeed. It is that which is most advantageous and desirable in this affection ; it is all that we must understand by compassion, when the Scripture ascribes it to the Lord ; and when we conceive it to be in Christ as God, in the divine nature, it is not in him a troublesome or passionate grief. That is an imperfection not to be ascribed to him ; nor would it be any advantage to us if he were liable to it. But it is a willingness in him to help and succour those whose state calls for pity or commiseration. It is an inclination to do that which is good, which is best for us under our infirmities, Mark i. 41, ix. 22.

[4.] This is accompanied with zeal and anger, or indignation, against those who occasion the grievance, or would make it worse and heavier. Christ hath left us an instance of this before he took our nature and infirmities, Zech. iii. 1, 2. Joshua, and those whom he represented, had infirmities enough, were covered, clothed with them, ver. 8. Satan makes use of them as matter of accusation, would have had the Lord severe against them, instead of pitying and relieving them. Hereupon Christ is moved with zeal and indignation against him, and expresses it, ver. 2; and has such a sense of his people's infirmities as raises his zeal and indignation against those who will have no compassion for them while they are under infirmities.

[4.] He is affected with our infirmities as a man; for he is not only God, but man. Herein the comparison holds betwixt Christ and the Levitical high priest, as the apostle expresseth it, Heb. v., and ii. 14. He assumed our nature, and so our affections; as he has a human nature, so he has human affections. He has such love, pity, compassion for his people in their infirmities, as are in the hearts of the children of men, the weaknesses excepted. They are in him properly, and not as they are attributed to God, to whom such affections are only ascribed metaphorically. When Scripture says, the Lord loves and pities, we must not conclude that he is affected as we are, but such acts and motions as we feel are ascribed to God from some little resemblance, a very remote likeness, whereas the difference is infinite. And we know no more what they are in God than the brutes know what these affections are in us; the distance is incomprehensibly greater. They do no more properly belong to God than a human soul, or the members of a body, belong to him, which yet are spoken of him in Scripture. But what is spoken after the manner of men must be understood in a way suitable to the excellency and perfection of God.

But these affections are not only ascribed to Christ after the manner of men, but they are truly and properly in him as he is man. He has truly and properly the heart and affections of a man; a heart that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, even as you feel your hearts affected with the sufferings of a very dear friend. He has such compassion as a parent has for the weaknesses of a beloved child, Ps. ciii. 13, Judges x. 16, Jer. xxxi. 20. This is ascribed to God very improperly; but it is true of Christ as he is man, in a most proper sense. There is no such grief and pity in God as there is in us, he is infinitely above them, &c.

It may be said that there is a great difference betwixt these affections as they are in Christ, and as they are in us, both in respect of the personal union of the human nature with the Godhead, and because of his now perfect and glorified state.

It must be confessed there is a difference upon these accounts, but it is such a difference as does nothing lessen the advantage, or abate the comfort, we may have from this particular.

First, For as [to] the personal union, this is not inconsistent with such affections as are in us, no, nor the sinless weakness of them; for Christ had and expressed such affections while he was on earth; and yet that union was then the same that it has been since, and will be for ever.

To instance but in one, his compassion; that which is most pertinent, and which seems to import more weakness than some other affections, as love, joy, desire. We find him shewing his compassions frequently, upon all occasions offered, Mat. ix. 36, and xiv. 14, and xv. 32, Mark i. 41, Luke vii. 13; yea, such was the tenderness of his compassions, as he often expressed it in tears. The motion of this affection was not confined to his soul, but wrought upon the body also; and made more impression there,

than it will do upon every temper, Luke ix. 41, 42, John xi. 83, 85, Heb. v. 7.

So that though he was God-man, yet his affections were like those of a mere man, only without sin. This affection did not prevent reason or disturb it, or hunger him into any irregularities, as inordinate passions do sinful men. And such calm, untainted affections in him, are of far more advantage and comfort to us than turbulent and excessive passions would be.

Secondly, As to his glorified state, the difference as to his affections is this, that they are perfected, freed from some weakness and imperfections, which, though they were in him without sin, yet were the effects of man's sin, and by the sin of man brought upon man's nature; which nature, so weakened, the Lord our Redeemer assumed, and continued under those innocent weaknesses during the state of his humiliation. But now being exalted to the height of perfection and glory, he is freed from those weaknesses, and all shadow of imperfection is vanished. There is no inward disquiet of his soul by grief or pity, as John xi. 83; no outward disturbing commotion of humours or spirits in his glorified body; no tears or weeping, as in the days of his flesh, which may be included in his being made perfect, Heb. v. 9; nothing remains which imports weakness, or suffering, or imperfection, 2 Cor. v. 16.

But we lose nothing by this alteration in his state and in his affections. The difference seems but to be this, now he has perfect affectionateness to his people in their infirmities; he perfectly pities and sympathises with them; his compassion and sympathy is without weakness or imperfection; not only without sinful weakness, which he never had, but without innocent weakness, which attended him in his love and suffering condition.

So that he still hath human affections to us, retaining still the human nature; he still has love, pity, compassion for us, not only such as are ascribed unto God, but such as are in the heart of a man (which we being better acquainted with, are more familiar and obvious encouragements and supports to us), only they are more perfect affections than are in the heart of any other man on earth or in heaven. There is less weakness in them; he more perfectly loves and pities us, and is more perfectly touched with the feeling of our infirmities, as man, now that he is in heaven, than when he was upon earth.

[5.] Christ is affected with our infirmities, as one concerned in us very much and nearly. A good man, when he sees another in wants, distress, misery, will be moved with it, though he be a stranger to him. Oh, but if he be one in whom he is concerned, one who is nearly related or much endeared to him, he will be much more affected, and more feelingly touched with his condition, Luke x. 80, 83. He did this for a stranger, what for a friend, brother, child? Christ is not affected with the infirmities of his people, as if they were strangers to him, and he no otherwise concerned in them than a stranger; but as one that has interest in them, that is related to them, that counts himself one with them and them one with him.

He is touched with the sense of our grievances, as one that has interest in us and we interested in him. This is intimated in the text; we have an high priest, he is ours and we are his; so that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, not as of those who belong not to him, but of those who are his own. Christ himself requires that we should have bowels of compassion for those who belong not to us, when their condition requires it; much more for those that are our own; and he himself will perfectly answer what he enjoins us in this particular.

As one related to us, nearly and many ways related, by all sorts of rela-

tions, those that are most endearing, and most oblige the heart to affectionateness and sympathy.

As a friend, John xv. 14, 15. Now, Job vi. 14, pity should be shewed to a friend; pity should be shewed to a servant, to a stranger, much more to a friend. Christ shewed great compassion to his enemies, what has he then for his friends, those that were dearer to him than his life?

As a brother, Heb. xii. 11, 12; Joseph's brethren, Gen. xlii. 21.

As a father with the grievances of his children, chap. ii. 18. Christ as a father presents himself and his little ones to the Lord as a pleasant sight. Now what a quick sense has a parent of the pain or wants of a dear child? Jer. xxxi. 20.

As a husband with the wants or sufferings of the wife of his own bosom, 2 Cor. xi. ver. 2. The covenant wherewith he married them to himself, is founded in his own blood; they were dearer to him than his own heart blood. How would a husband of such love (if there were any had such love) be touched with the feeling of what is grievous to his wife? So is Christ touched with the sense of his people's infirmities; he is not affected with them as though they were aliens, but as those whom he owns in the nearest and most obliging relations.

Yea, he is touched, &c., as one united to us, as counting himself one with us. The nearness of this union is expressed by that of head and members, Eph. i. 22, 23; and this is laid down as the ground and reason of the sympathy, 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27. When one member suffers, all the rest are sensible; but especially the head, which is the foundation of sense. Christ being the head, from whence spiritual sense is derived from its members, by which they sympathise with one another, he himself is sensible of what is grievous to the members in particular; on this account, in all their afflictions he is afflicted.

He being one with them, he counts their sufferings his; he is afflicted with their want, pain, suffering, as if it were his own. The troubles which Saul gave the primitive saints, he resents it as a persecuting of himself, Acts ix. 5; he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye; yea, any neglect to relieve the least of them in their infirmities, he is sensible of it as a neglect of himself, Mat. xxv. He is affected with their infirmities, as one greatly concerned, no less than if it were his own concernment.

[6.] He is affected with them really and to purpose; he is touched with the feeling of them effectually. It is not an ineffectual sympathy, a fruitless pity, like that censured by the apostle, James ii. 15, 16; but it is active, that which is really advantageous to us every way: to give what we want, to secure us from what we fear, to ease us of what is grievous, or to do for us that which is as good or better.

It includes a readiness in Christ to accommodate himself to all our infirmities, according to the exigence of them, so as to give ease, relief, supply, deliverance; so far as is needful, as soon as it is seasonable, whenever it will be good for us.

It makes him ready to shew mercy and grace in time of need; so ready, as we may be confident of it. It is the ground of what is held forth in the next verse; 'in that he is touched with the feeling,' &c. We may have help and relief under all infirmities; we may have whatever of this nature will be a mercy to us; all that is mercy we may obtain, and this is all that is desirable. We may have it freely, from grace; we may find grace, which gives without money or price; we need but come to find it, we need but ask to obtain it. We may have it in abundance from him who sits upon the throne to shew himself gracious; whose glory it is to give like himself, the

King of kings ; to give royally, liberally, bountifully. We may have it all whenever we need it, whenever it will be seasonable ; and we may be confident of all this, because he has such a sense of our infirmities ; this leaves us no occasion in the least to doubt of it. We may have all that heart can reasonably desire, in such kind, in such way, in such measure, and at such times, as is most desirable. We may be sure, because he is touched with the feeling, &c. He has a more effectual sense of them than any other, men or angels, yea, or we ourselves have ; for he has such a sense thereof as will assuredly bring relief, which neither we ourselves, nor men or angels for us, can do in many cases.

[7.] It is an extensive sympathy, it reaches all our infirmities. He has compassion on us in all our weaknesses, all that we suffer by, in all that has anything of misery or activeness in it. This is plain by the latter end of this verse : he 'was in all points tempted,' &c. He is touched with the feeling of all those infirmities wherewith himself was tempted or exercised ; but he was exercised in all points with all our weaknesses, but those that are without sin.

Oh, but it may be said, this exception does exclude the greatest part of our infirmities from this sympathy, and us from the comfort and advantage of it, in those points too which stand in most need of it ; for those infirmities which proceed from sin, or are mixed with it, and sin itself especially, are our greatest misery, make our present state most lamentable, and so stand in most need of pity and relief. If Christ be not touched with the feeling of these (which are worst of all), so as to have compassion on us, and be ready to succour us, we are to seek in our greatest pressures and grievances, where we have most necessity of relief and pity ; as *e.g.*,

1. In those infirmities which are from sin, the effects of sin, which are many and great, is he not touched with the feeling, &c. ?

I answer, Yes, he is touched, &c. These are not excluded by the expression. He himself laboured under these ; for such infirmities as are from sin may be sinless, though they be the effects of sin, yet they may be innocent in themselves, and without sin ; and all that are without sin he himself was exercised with. He was tempted in all points, exercised with all infirmities, even those which are the effects of sin, as we are ; only they were in him without sin, as they are not in us. For,

Let it be observed, that Christ took not our nature, as it is now in the glorified saints, who are not only freed from sin, but from all the sad effects of it ; nor as it was in our first parents, in the state of innocence, before they had sinned, and before sin had made any breach upon human nature, and brought those weaknesses and infirmities upon it which they afterward and we now suffer under. But he took the nature of fallen man, as it was bruised and rendered infirm by the fall ; he took our nature as weakened by sin, though not as defiled by it ; there was no sin in his human nature, but there were those weaknesses and infirmities which were the sad issues of sin. These he laboured under, and so knows how to pity and sympathise effectually with those that are yet under them. He was not exempted from those infirmities which are part of the curse brought upon our nature by sin, but only exempted from what was sinful in them, Rom. viii. 3, where *likeness* refers not only to *flesh* (for that in him was not only like, but the same with ours), but to *sinful* flesh. He assumed our nature, not as it is glorified, or as it was innocent, but as it is sinful, as it is under the effects of sin. The meaning is, he had a human nature just such as that of sinful man ; as frail, as infirm, as mortal, as corruptible as that of sinful man,

altogether like it in those infirmities which are the effects of sin, but without sin in him.

Obj. It may be said, there are some infirmities in us which are the effects of sin, which Christ was not exercised with, as painful distempers and sicknesses; yet these are grievous and afflictive to us, and so need his compassions and relief. But how can he be touched with the feeling of them, since he never felt them, never was tempted or exercised with them?

Ans. Those infirmities (the issues of sin) which Christ took on him, were such as are natural, common to the nature of man and all mankind; not such as are personal and proper to some only, as those he which are instanced in; but though he did not suffer by these, yet the grievance and afflictiveness that is in them he suffered. He endured as much trouble, and more, than any fever can afflict us with, in that agony, which forced from him a bloody sweat; he endured as much pain as any man in the most acute sickness or distemper, when nails were driven through his hands and feet. And so he knows by experience what pity and relief such anguish and pain calls for, and thereby is disposed to sympathise with his people therein, as effectually as if himself had been exercised with those particular and personal distempers which are so afflictive to nature. That, Mat. viii. 17, holds true in respect of his effectual sympathy with us, in sickness and painful distempers.

The grounds which may assure us of the truth of this are such as these:

(1.) This was one end why he took our nature, and became man. It was not only that he might suffer *for* us, but also that he might suffer *with* us, by a compassionate feeling of what we suffer. He was to be like the Levitical high priest, Heb. v. 1, taken from among men. And why so? Ver. 2, that he might be the more disposed to have compassion on his people in their infirmities; even those that are sinful, and are so less or more, Heb. ii. 16, 17. He took man's very nature, the seed of Abraham, and was made in all things like unto us in our nature, in its parts, properties, infirmities, in all. Wherefore? Why, that he might be merciful; that he might have the mercies and compassions, not only of God, but of a man also. Such mercies and compassions as angels have not for us, yea, such as God alone could not have had for us; not only those of God, but those of man too. He might have had the mercies of angels for us, if he had taken the nature of angels; he might have had the mercies of God for us, if he had not taken our nature; but he could not have the mercies and compassions both of God and also of man for us, unless he had become man; and therefore it behoved him to be made like us, that there might be in him a concurrence both of the mercies of God and of man also; that he might not only be merciful to us as God, but compassionate us as one man does another; and that he might pity us too out of experience, as one that had been exercised with the feeling of the very same weaknesses and grievances that we feel, ver. 18. He became man, that he might be exercised with such weaknesses and grievances as the children of men are; and was actually tempted or exercised with them, that his own experience might render him ready and forward to pity and succour us under them.

Now, this being the end why he became man, it is no more to be doubted of than that he took our nature. As sure as he was taken from among men; as sure as he was born of a woman; as sure as he is the man Christ Jesus; as sure as he has the nature, the soul of a man; as sure as he has the affections of a human soul: so sure it is that he is touched with the feeling, &c.; with such a feeling as is collected from Scripture.

(2.) This was the end of his sufferings, Heb. ii. 18. All that he suffered, by our weaknesses, our sins, was that he might succour those that

suffer by them, that he might be touched effectually with the sense of what we are exercised with. As by his sufferings he learned obedience, Heb. v. 8, so thereby he learned compassionateness to his people. Indeed, this was one part of that obedience which he was to learn thereby. The Father would have him to be a compassionate high priest; and himself suffering by our infirmities, and for our sins, he learnt by experience how to pity those that suffer.

Now, this being the end of his sufferings, as sure as he would not suffer so many things in vain, as sure as he would not lose the end of his suffering, so sure it is that he is touched, &c.

(8.) It is his office, as he is high priest. This office required it. He being called to this office, must be faithful in the discharge of it. He could not have been faithful herein if he had not been merciful. These are conjoined by the apostle, chap. ii. 17. Compassionateness was required in the Levitical high priest to the faithful discharge of his office, chap. v. 1, 2. Two things are necessary in every one who has this office: one in reference to God, to offer sacrifice for reconciling him; the other in reference to the people, that he can have compassion on them, that he be touched with the compassionate sense of their infirmities, as one who himself has suffered by and under them.

Now, Christ far excelled all other high priests in both these; as in the former, so in the latter. He answered the office herein perfectly, as none else could. It behoved him so to do, vers. 8, 9. Made perfect, how? 'By the things which he suffered,' ver. 8; 'by sufferings,' chap. ii. 10. Though he had all perfection in his person, yet he could not be made perfect in his office without suffering. For his office was both to satisfy God, and to have compassion on man; and by suffering he came to do both perfectly. Thereby he satisfied divine justice, and thereby he learnt experimentally compassions to his people. So that, without this latter, a compassionate feeling of his people's infirmities, he had not been perfect in his office. As sure as Christ is faithful, as sure as he perfectly discharged his office, so sure is he touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

2. But in sinful infirmities, what relief is there hereby for them? Christ was not touched with any that were sinful, and how can he be touched with the feeling of them? *e. g.* the people of Christ have much ignorance and darkness, and many spiritual wants; they are sinfully defective, both in knowledge and holiness; and these are in themselves, and to those that are duly sensible of them, greater miseries than poverty, or sickness, or other outward afflictions and sufferings.

I answer, Christ had something of these, though nothing of the sinfulness of them; so much of these, as that he can sympathise with his people under them.

He wanted much knowledge of many things; he wanted some spiritual gifts, yea, and some exercise of grace, in some parts of his life, while he was upon earth. He came not to perfection in these, but by degrees, and till then was under some defect and imperfection, though not any that was sinful. For he wanted none that he ought to have had, or that his present state was capable of; yet, wants, defects, and inward weaknesses, without sin, he was really under, Luke ii. 40, 52. Hereby it seems plain, that he had not at first that measure of knowledge, and of the Holy Ghost, as afterwards. He knew not so much, nor had that exercise of grace in his infancy or childhood, as at perfect age. His faculties were not capable of full perfection herein till they came to full maturity; he grew but up herein by degrees, as he grew in stature, and consequently was without

some degrees of what he after attained ; and till then, under defects and wants, though sinless. So that he knows by experience what it is to be under defects and wants, and so knows how to pity those who labour under them. In this the comparison holds betwixt him and the Levitical high priest, chap. v. 2.

3. Oh, but he was never touched with sin, chap. i. 16, and this is our greatest misery, the sting of all grievances, that which makes all other to be heavy and grievous. If he be not touched with the feeling of our sin, we are at a loss where we have most need.

I answer, There are four things considerable about sin, the offence, temptation to it, guilt of it, punishment for it. Now there are none of these but Christ was touched with them, but the first only. He was without fault ; there was nothing in him, nor acted by him, which was an offence to God, 1 Peter ii. 28. He was perfectly innocent ; and if he had not been so, he had not been capable of bringing us any relief as to sin ; he could neither have been a high priest nor a sacrifice for sin.

But (1.) he was tempted to sin ; tempted much and long by Satan, and to the most horrid sin, chap. ii. 18. In that he was tempted, he is disposed, he is both able and willing to, &c. ; in that he ' suffered by being tempted,' he can pity, and so is ready to succour those that suffer by temptation. He was not overcome when tempted, though he suffered by it, but he knows hereby what it is to be overcome ; for the sense of that kept him from yielding, and so he knows how to have compassion on those that are overcome by temptation.

(2.) The guilt of sin, of our sin, was upon him, 2 Cor. v. 21. Sin was imputed to him ; he was by imputation a sinner, though he never sinned personally. Our guilt was laid on him. Guilt is an obligation to the penalty. Christ came under this obligation, and so under guilt ; not by his own sin, but by his own consent he became our surety, and so was bound to pay the debt. Guilty so far, as to be bound to endure what sin had deserved, and sinners were worthy to suffer.

So far he was touched with the guilt of sin ; so far he knows what it is to be under guilt, and so knows what pity and relief they need who are under it. So far he is touched with the sense of their condition who are guilty, chap. v. 2.

(3.) As to the punishment of sin, he was not only exposed to it, and bound to bear it, but actually endured it, Isa. liii. 4-6. ' The iniquities,' i. e. the punishment of them, all the punishment that was due to all ; the whole curse was inflicted on him, so he is said to be ' made a curse,' Gal. iii. 18.

So that he had a greater sense of sin than any of his people ever had. We may hear him cry out under the weight of it, Lam. i. 12. The whole penalty and curse was upon him, part of which made his soul heavy unto death.

So that, though he was without sin, yet he was touched, or rather oppressed with such a sense of sin, as is enough abundantly to move him to all compassionateness to any of his people under the burden. It is an extensive sympathy ; such as reaches not only infirmities that have no respect to sin, but those that are from sin, as its effects, and those that are sinful formally, yea, sin itself ; he is touched with the feeling of all.

[8.] It is a proportionable sympathy ; a compassion which is exactly answerable to the nature and quality of every infirmity ; fully commensurable to it, whatever it be. As it is not more than it needs, so it is not less than it requires, how much compassion and relief soever it calls for. This is ex-

press, chap. v. 2, *δυνάμενος μετριοπαθεῖν*, rendered 'who can have compassion;' but the word signifies, a compassion or sympathy answerable to the occasion. *Quantum satis est*, so much as is sufficient for it. Not only when the grievance of it is less, but when it is more; proportionable to the actual afflictiveness of it at present, and the danger of it for the future; to what we do suffer by it, or what we may suffer.

This was the duty of the Levitical high priest, with whom Christ is there compared. He did thus sympathise with the people in their infirmities, in proportion to their ignorances and wanderings, when he was faithful in answering his office. But Christ herein excelled him, as the apostle shews, ver. 7. He shewed his compassions in strong cries and tears, and does it still; though not in such expressions, yet as effectually, and more perfectly. We may be apt to measure Christ by ourselves, and to think that small grievances he will overlook and pass by without regard or resentment, and that he will not trouble himself with those that are greater, according to the exigence of them. But he has a sense of every infirmity, proportionable to the grievance or danger of it. The least he slights not, the greatest he waives not; turns not aside, as the priest and Levite did, as if a resentment answerable to it would be troublesome to him. He is not like us, who have no sense of others' grievances when but small, or but little sense of them when they are great. But he has a compassion for all, and more for those which need and require more. He has a due sense of all, and that which is sufficient for our relief and comfort; not only in the least, but the greatest.

9. A constant and perpetual sympathy. It continues without any intermission so long as he is high priest, or so long as our infirmities continue; so long as we are under any weakness, inward or outward; so long as we are in any danger or peril; so long as we are exposed to any trouble or suffering.

This is one thing wherein the faithful discharge of his priestly office consists. And he is a priest for ever, Ps. cx. 4, repeated often in this epistle, chap. v. 6, and vii. 17, 21.

It is true, one principal part of his office, as priest, the offering himself as a sacrifice as priest, the offering himself as a sacrifice for sin, is already finished and discharged. And sin being fully expiated by that once offering of himself, there is no need of repeating it. But this efficacy of it does still continue; and in the virtue of it his intercession (the other part of his office as priest) is still effectual, and will be for ever, chap. vii. 25. There will be some alteration also as to this part of his office. Now he intercedes for relief and comfort to his people under infirmities, and for deliverance from them. And when full deliverance is obtained, there will be no need, no occasion to intercede either for succour in, or freedom from, them; but even then he will intercede for the continuance of that happy deliverance. And both his sacrifice and intercession will have an influence upon, and be effectual for the everlasting continuance of that blessed freedom.

So that, though there be some change in the acts, yet the office of Christ as high priest continues for ever; and is, and will be exercised in acts suitable to the state of his people.

Now, while his people are compassed with infirmities, he shews himself a merciful and faithful high priest, in effectual pity and compassionate sympathy. And so he will continue while they are under weaknesses, *i.e.* so long as ever there is any occasion for it, and his people have any need thereof. But when they are fully delivered, and their weaknesses end in perfection, then joy will succeed compassion, and the conflict, with the succour therein, will end in an everlasting triumph.

Thus much to explain this truth. Something should be added for confirmation of it. It is so great and wonderful a condescension in Christ to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that some may be apt to question it, very ready to doubt of it, too slow to deliver* it. Faith may want some grounds to support it, and encourage it in the belief of a truth so strange to reason, so far above all expectation, beyond all we could ask or think. And there are grounds for it sure and stedfast, which the apostle lays down in this epistle.

Use 1. For instruction. This truth leads the people of Christ to many duties, and strongly obliges to the performance of them.

1. To admire Christ; to employ your minds in high, adoring, admiring thoughts of Christ. He is wonderful; it is his attribute, Isa. ix. Wonderful every way, in his person, natures, offices, and the execution of them; but especially wonderful in this, that he would be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And this will appear wonderful in our eyes, if we consider who he is that is thus touched, and what was required that he might be capable of this sense, &c., and what such a sense thereof imports.

For the first, Christ, as to his divine nature, is God; the great, blessed, glorious, and all sufficient God, infinite in happiness and all excellencies; farther above us, and the noblest piece of the creation, unconceivably farther above the highest, than the most excellent creatures are above the vilest thing on earth, the meanest thing imaginable. He could expect nothing from us, no advantage by us; not the least degree of glory or happiness, being in the perfect possession of infinite glory and happiness without us. He had lost nothing if we had perished in our sin without pity, and sunk under the weight of our infirmities. We had nothing to oblige him to concern himself in our weaknesses and miseries; why then would he bring himself under the sense of them? How wonderful it is that he would do it!

2. That he might be capable of the sense of our infirmities, he was to take upon him both our nature and our infirmities, and it is highly wonderful that he would meddle with either.

It was requisite that he should assume a created nature. And if this nature had been that of the angels, this had been a wonderful condescension; infinitely more wonderful than if the most glorious angel should have been willing to take the form of the vilest creeping thing; for the distance is infinitely greater betwixt God and such an angel, than betwixt such an angel and any creeping thing we tread on.

But he was to take the nature of man, so much lower than that of the angels; more wonderful than if the most glorious potentate on earth should be willing to live in the form of a beast, or to take the shape of a worm; the glorious God stooped lower when he took the nature of man.

Yea, he was to take the nature of sinful man. The 'likeness of sinful flesh,' Rom. viii. 3. As if a man should be willing not only to take the likeness of a worm, but the likeness of a toad, though without poison, for which our nature has a greater averseness and abhorrence. This would be an astonishment. Oh, but the infinitely holy God had a greater averseness to sinful flesh than we have to a toad, and yet took the likeness of sinful flesh; he assumed it as it was abased by sin, as the effects of the venom and poison of sin was upon it, though without the sin of it. How wonderful is this!

Yea, he was to take our infirmities also. Not only the excellencies in our natures singled out for him, as divers there were wherein we excelled the inferior creatures, but the weaknesses, the blemishes, the debasements of

* Qu. 'believe'?—Ed.

our nature, as it was sullied, and bruised, and crazed by the fall ; under all the defects, and maims, and disadvantages it had suffered by sin, sin itself only excepted, he declined none else. He took, he bare all, he laboured under all, that [he might] have a compassionate sense of all, the vilest, the worst of all, by his own feeling. It may well seem a debasement of such a glory to unite our nature to him in its best state, as it was innocent, or as it is glorified. How wonderful is it that he would assume it when it was at worst, with all its specks, and flaws, and cracks, all its rags and vileness, all its bruises and weaknesses ; nothing excluded, not the effects of sin, but only sin itself !

It is infinitely below that glorious majesty of God, to be clothed with the sun, as he was clothed with flesh. What a wonderful condescension would it be for him to be covered over with clay, with mud ! We would think it so in a person of honour, though the mud were without stench ; and yet our nature was viler to Christ, as he is the God of glory, than any clay or mud is to us. Oh that he, the King of glory, should clothe himself with so vile a thing, should appear and live in such a covering that he might learn to pity us ! What an astonishment is it ! If our minds were duly exercised with the thoughts of these things, how would they strike our souls with wonder and admiration !

3. For the import of it, this being touched with the feeling, &c., is a kind of suffering with us. It includes compassion, a motion of the heart which is taken to have more weakness in it than other affections.

Now, that the God of glory should have such respect to contemptible creatures, as not only to suffer for, but also to suffer with them ;—

That he should have compassions on us in infirmities, which are the effects of sin, or in themselves sinful, and shew compassion and tenderness where there is just and proper occasion for his anger, indignation, and severity ;—

That he should concern himself, not only in those cases where common friends will stand by us, but in our weaknesses, where others will be ashamed of us ; in dangers and sufferings, where others will be afraid ; in the sad circumstances of our lives, when others withdraw, and where his own best friends on earth deserted him ;—

That he should have such regard for those who are infinitely below him, and whom he might pass by with as much disregard as we do flies or grasshoppers ; for we are incomparably less to him than these are to us ;—

If these things were in our thoughts, what occasion of wonder will they offer to us ! How admirable is Christ hereby represented to us ! how worthy of all admiration, both from heaven and earth, both now and everlastingly !

2. To love Christ. There is no greater attractive of love to an ingenious temper than love. Now in that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, you have a most evident demonstration that he loves you ; and with such a love as is most obliging, such as is most proper and powerful to command, excite, and draw out your affections to him. For hereby it is very clear what his love to you is.

(1.) A great love, and most extensive ; that can reach all conditions and circumstances which you are or may be in, even such as the love of others will not touch, will not come near : a love that will shew itself in all cases, even where it could be least expected ; a love that will surmount and overflow all discouragements. No want, no weakness, no hazard, no suffering, is able to quell or stop it. It breaks forth in all, for he is touched with an affectionate sense of all these.

(2.) A free love. This is an evidence he can love freely; he can love those who are all made up of defects and imperfections, who are covered with specks and blemishes, who are compassed with infirmities; not only with those that are sinless, which might move him to despise us, but those that are sinful, which might provoke him to hate us. He is affectionately touched with the feeling of all.

He can love those souls that are crazy and sickly, that are lame and maimed, that labour under many weaknesses and infirmities, such as hinder them from being duly serviceable to all,* and honouring him in the world, or expressing any love to him answerable to his. Though they be poor and in want, though their parts be low, though graces be weak, and their affection to him small, very small in comparison of what they owe, yea, nothing in comparison of what he deserves; though they can do little for him, and suffer less, this is so far from withholding his love, that it runs out the more in a compassionate sense of their weaknesses.

He can love his people, though they have nothing to oblige him to do it; yea, though there is little in them but what might disoblige him. Their infirmities of all sorts, which might estrange him, meet with a tender resentment, in that he is affectionately touched with the feeling of them.

(8.) A lasting, a constant love, such as all the waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. It cannot be nonplussed, it abides the sorest trials. When his people are low and weak, when poor and despised, when reproached and hated, when cast off by all, when overwhelmed with all that extinguish love amongst men, it abides the same, not in the least cooled: 'Who can separate,' &c., Rom. viii. All these are comprised in the notion of those infirmities wherewith Christ is affectionately touched. His love flames forth even in the waters, which quench the love of others. Instead of withdrawing his affection in such cases, he expresseth it more, and suffers with them, being touched with the feeling of those infirmities by which they suffer.

(4.) A peerless love. It cannot be matched. There is no such thing to be found in heaven or earth, but in Christ only. The text shews that, as he is high priest, he is touched with the feeling, &c. Therein his love appears. Now, as he is high priest, he is both God and man; and so his love to us is both the love of God and also the love of man in one person. No instance of such a love can be given in the whole world. There is no such love in the angels, how much soever they affect the people of Christ, for theirs is neither the love of God nor the love of men. There had been no such love in God alone; his was the love of God only, not of man. But Christ's affection to us is both the love of God and the love of man in one person.

Look over heaven and earth, and you will never find two springs of love in one subject, whether it be finite or infinite. There is but one in an angel, there is but one in man, there is but one in God. The angel has but one nature, man has but one heart, God has but one will, each of these a single spring. Oh, but in Christ, and in him alone, there is a double fountain of love, each sending forth its proper streams, both meeting upon his people. The divine nature is one fountain; there springs the love of God to us. The human nature is another; there springs the love of man to us; and both these in one person, in one Christ.

It is true, the love of God alone is infinite, too much for us, or the most excellent creatures. There is infiniteness and incomprehensibleness in it, that which may astonish and transport us eternally; but there is not that

* Qu. 'him'?—ED.

suitableness in it to our natures or apprehensions, as there is in man's love (not through any defect in it, but through our weakness); and though we should be more taken with it, because it is so much as we cannot apprehend, yet we are subject to be less moved with that which we apprehend not, or are less acquainted with. Whereas human love, such as is in the heart of man, is both co-natural to us, and we are well acquainted with it. We know not by experience what it is to love as God loves; such a love was never seated, nor ever moved in the heart of man; but we know by experience what it is to love as men do; we have felt the motions of such a love in our own breasts.

Now such is the love of Christ to his people, in that he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. Hereby it appears that he has the love, pity, compassions of a man for us, not that love of God only. There is both infiniteness, incomprehensibleness in his love, and likewise suitableness, co-naturalness also; that which may not only transport us, but make the most impression on our hearts, and move our affections in the most suitable and kindly way. The love of God is hereby brought down to our capacity, to our experience, to our feeling; in that he who is God would not only love us like himself, with the love of God, but as man also, with such a love as is in the heart of a man.

Oh what a way has he made for our love to him! He loved us as God; and if that be above us, if that will not prevail with us as it should do, this love made him become man, that he might love us with such a love as most suits us, and we are most apprehensive of, not only with the love of God, but of man also. Herein his love is matchless; and so will our stupidity and ungratefulness be, if we love him not again.

Moreover, it is peerless love upon another account; not only because the love of God and the love of man meet in one person, but also because the love of all relations meet in his human nature, and that to each of his people. Not as it is with us, who have but the love of one relation for one, and of another for another, but not the love of all for any one. But Christ has the love of all relations, as much as all require, for every one that belongs to him. Jonathan had the love of a friend for David, and Joseph of a brother for Benjamin, and Jacob that of a father for Joseph, and Abraham that of a husband for Sarah, and Rachel that of a mother for her children; but none of them had the love of all these for any one. If these several streams which did run in divers channels had been united, and run in one current towards any one, it had been a matchless love, such as could not be paralleled on earth.

Now such is the love of Christ. He has the love of a friend, a brother, a father, a husband, of all relations, for every one of his people, Mat. xii. 48-50. He owns such in all relations, and thereby declares himself obliged to have the love of all relations for every of them.

And his sympathy, his pity, and compassions, which proceed from this love, are answerable to it. He is as affectionately and as effectually touched with the feeling of his people's infirmities as if every one of them were every way related to him; as if they were both his friends, his brethren, his sisters, his mother, his children, and his spouse. He has the compassions, and so the love, not only of one relation for one, and another relation for another, but of all relations together for every one of his.

(5.) It is a cordial love, not in show or appearance only, not in outward acts and expressions, but such as springs from his heart, and affects that. He is touched, *i. e.* his heart is touched with the concerns of his people; he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, *i. e.* his heart feels. It is his

love that makes him inwardly, feelingly, heartily sensible of what they suffer. This excites inward motions, stirs up compassions, and all affections that depend thereon; not only delight, which is an affection of enjoyment, to which therefore the nature of man is more inclinable, but pity and compassion, which (as I said before) is some kind of suffering to which our nature is more averse.

His glorified body is now above suffering, but his heart suffers still, so far as perfect compassionateness is a suffering. His love is such that the grievances of his people touch his heart as if they were his own. Paul calls his suffering the 'filling up of that which remains of the afflictions of Christ,' Col. i. 24. The afflictions of his mystical body are resented by his love as if they were his own. Paul learnt this of Christ before; he expressed such a heart-resentment of his people's grievances when he suffered by Saul, Acts ix. 4, 5. Saul trod but on the feet, and the head complains. He would not have complained that himself was persecuted, but that himself some way suffered. His glorified body suffered not; this was above the reach of persecution. What then suffered? Why, his heart. The injuries reached not his body, but they touched his heart. This was touched, not with a painful but with a compassionate sense, which is the touch in the text, and is expressed by *συμπαθῆσαι*, a co-suffering, a suffering in mind or heart with those who suffer otherwise.

You will say he loves you heartily, whose heart and soul suffers with you, when his body cannot. Such is the love of Christ; hereby it appears to be such, in that his heart is touched with the feeling, &c. He lays to heart the wants, weaknesses, dangers, grievances of his people. His heart is on them, or else that which touches them would not reach his heart.

(6.) An all-sufficient love. That which is sufficient for us whenever our condition is exigent, and in any need, and sufficient for all that we need or can reasonably desire in such a condition, is all-sufficient.

Now, such is the love of Christ, and such it is represented to be in the text. This love shews itself in all our infirmities, and these comprise all the exigencies of our present condition in this world. Therein are included our weaknesses, our wants, our dangers, our troubles, whether inward or outward. This is the sum of all that our frail condition is subject to or labours under. Now, the love of Christ reaches all these, and us in and under them all, in that he has an affectionate sense of all our infirmities.

And it is sufficient for all that our condition requires in all or any of these, for all that we need desire under them is but pity and relief. These two comprise all that is needful or desirable for us, and the love of Christ affords both, assures us both in that he is touched with the feeling of our condition. For that which the text gives us in these terms here is expressed by compassion and succour in this epistle; by compassion, chap. v. 2; by succour, chap. ii. 18; and both together in the verse after the text.

That is an all-sufficient love which will let you want nothing. But when your condition is saddest and most necessitous, you want nothing but pity and help. These are abundantly enough in the greatest, in any time of need; and these the love of Christ will not let you want. He gives all assurance of it, in that he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities.

Hereby you see what love Christ has for his people, what love he has for you, if ye be his indeed. It is most evident by this truth that he has a greater love.

Now what does this call for? Deep calls to deep. The love of Christ, such a love calls aloud, calls importunately for love again. Will you deny

the importunity of love, of Christ's love, of a love so obliging? No renewed heart, no ingenuous spirit, no soul that has anything of an evangelical temper, can resist it; it will kindle into love, a love that will stir and act and sparkle at the view of the love of Christ, that will be ashamed of its own weakness, coolness, unactiveness, and shew it by diligence in the use of all means to get inflamed affections to Christ.

Oh, if the love of Christ, such a love, will not constrain you to love him again, what is there in heaven or earth can have any power upon your hearts? If you can hear and believe that Christ is thus touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and this prevails not with you to love him, your hearts are stone.

Shall love amongst men be judged worthy of a requital with love, and shall the love of Christ, in comparison of which all the love of the children of men is nothing, want this return?

If you return not love to him for this love of his, you are worse than publicans, Mat. v. 46. If you love those that love you, this is not thank-worthy; it is due debt, even the publicans will pay it. If you love not Christ after such love expressed to you, ye are worse than they, worse than the most ill-natured, the most selfish, the most disingenuous, the most odious sinners; worse to Christ than these are to one another; as much worse to Christ, as the love of Christ is greater than any that is to be found in the hearts of men.

8. Another duty which this truth calls for and engages us to is to hold fast our profession. This is the use which the apostle makes of it; this is the end why he lays down this great and comfortable truth, viz. to encourage and oblige them to continue in their profession of Christ, and hold it fast; to engage them neither to abandon it nor to abate anything of it, neither to quit it in whole nor in part: ver. 14, 'Let us hold,' &c. Why so? What reason, what motive, what encouragement have we to do it? Much every way, that which is abundantly sufficient, says he, for, ver. 15, 'since we have such an high priest,' &c. let us hold our profession of Christ, and hold it fast. Let our judgments be established in the truth we profess, else we shall not hold it. Let our hearts clasp about it and embrace the goodness of it, else we shall not hold it fast.

Let us hold it *firmly*, stedfastly, without wavering, else we hold it but with a palsy hand. Hold it without indifference; not, as the Israelites of old, halting between two, 1 Kings xviii. 21; nor as some of the Jews in the apostle's time, who halted between law and gospel, betwixt their former legal profession and the profession of Christ; not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, Gal. ii. 14; or as others now, halting betwixt Christ and antichrist, betwixt popery and pure religion. And as those judaising Christians made a medley of law and gospel, so do these a hotch-potch of popery and true profession, in doctrine, worship, or government; shewing themselves to be indifferent, in many points, to either, and thereby tempting others to be indifferent in all, and to be determined as their interest may require. This is not to hold fast, but to be fast or loose as occasion serves; to be fast to nothing, but their carnal or worldly interest, James i. 8.

Let us hold it *resolutely*, without timorousness or cowardice. Not like those represented to us by the stony ground, Mat. xiii. 21. We had need look to it, having reason enough to expect greater and sorer trials, as to our profession, than this age has exercised us with, or that before it our ancestors. If we be found amongst the cowardly and fearful here, we shall have our place with them hereafter, Rev. xxi. 8, *inter omnes, imo ante omnes, timidis.*

Let us hold it *affectionately*, with zeal, delight, and love for Christ, his truths and ways, without remitting any degree of affection or fervour. He that grows cool lets go his hold, or the fastness of it. We hold not fast our profession, but when our hearts are fastened to it, and that is by affection. These are the strings and cords that fasten our hearts to it; when these are slackened, our hold is loosened.

Let us hold it *openly*, without fear or shame. It is not a thing of that nature that we should either be afraid or ashamed of. These make men shrink or draw back, and he that draws back sticks not fast to his profession. The apostle would not allow the Hebrews, even in the midst of the reproaches and hazards wherewith they were encompassed, to hide their heads, contenting themselves with a secret or concealed profession, and withdrawing from their assemblies, Heb. x. 25. Those that forsook their assemblies were such as had already deserted their profession, or were not (if they yet held it) like to hold it fast.

Hold it *entirely*, extensively, in all the parts and acts, all the truths and duties, which belong to your profession. He that lets go any, has not fast hold of the whole. He that will hold only the safe, and cheap, and easy parts of his profession, lets go his hold where he is most tried, where it should be fastest.

Thus we should hold fast our profession. And we have great encouragement from this truth to do it; it affords that which strongly obliges us, neither to quit it of our own accord, nor to suffer anything to force it from us. It offers enough to arm us against temptations we may meet with of such a tendency.

That which may tempt us, either to quit our profession or to abate anything of it, is either the difficulties in it, or the hazards of it. Now, in that Christ is touched, &c., we are secured, we are encouraged, we are fortified against both these, both as to what may seem hard or difficult in it, and what we may hazard or suffer by it.

1. As for the difficulties. There are some acts, some duties of our profession, are too hard for us. Our infirmities and weaknesses cannot reach them, or make us drive on heavily in them. This may make us weary, or tempt some to give over.

But against this, in that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we have these encouragements.

(1.) Christ expects not that from his people, which their infirmities and weaknesses cannot reach. He is our high priest; ours by virtue of an office which requires all tenderness and compassionateness. He expressed it, and perfectly answers it, in being touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

A master that is merciful will not press that upon a sickly servant which his distemper will not suffer him to do. If he be careless and slothful, indeed he may be angry; but in that which he falls short of, merely because he is sick, he will shew pity rather than rigour.

Christ is a merciful high priest. He knows that weaknesses and inward distempers are the sickness of the soul. He would not have us slothful, indulgent to carnal ease; that will displease him. But he looks not for more than a sickly temper can afford. 'If there be a willing mind,' 2 Cor. viii. 12; if he see there is really a willing mind to do more and better, that which we cannot do will not be expected. That which we do, though it fall far short of what is due, will be accepted.

A parent that has any tenderness will not look for that from an infant, or weak child, that he expects from another. He will be pleased with a little

done by a weakling, out of affection and sense of duty. What cannot be done through weakness, will be passed by with pity.

We have a high priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who has the compassions of God, of man, of a father, of all relations : Ps. ciii. 13, 14, 'He knows our frame,' of what a frail and infirm composition it is ; he knows it by experience, and learned compassionateness thereby. And in that he is touched with the compassionate sense of our weaknesses, he will not rigorously exact what through infirmity we cannot reach.

(2.) He will not be severe for failings, such as are the issue of our infirmities. He has a tender sense of our weaknesses, pities us under them ; and such a compassionate tenderness excludes severity, leaves no occasion to fear it. We have a pregnant instance hereof in the days of his flesh, Mat. xxvi. 37-41. His soul was under great affliction ; he desires his disciples to watch with him a little while ; they, instead thereof, fall asleep. He might have resented this heinously, that they would not attend him watchfully for one hour, for so little a while, and that too when he was in so great extremity, when his soul was so exceeding sorrowful even unto death. They could not but condemn themselves for this ; but he, instead of condemning them, or making any severe or sharp reflection upon them for it, finds out an excuse for them, 'The spirit is willing,' &c. He takes gracious notice of a willingness within, when no such thing appears without, when it was quite overpowered with weakness, and gives the weakness itself a merciful allowance.

(3.) He will succour you. In that he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, you may be sure he is ready and willing to do this to relieve you, either by lessening the difficulty or the infirmity ; either by making the burden less, or healing the sore which makes it uneasy. In that he has such a sense of our infirmities, we may conclude, as the apostle does, that we shall 'find grace to help in time of need,' as much as is sufficient. He assures him of it, 2 Cor. xii. 9. The perfection of his strength appears most in the weak. This made Paul bear up under all difficulties, to such a height, as he could rejoice, yea, glory, in the hardest circumstances that encountered him, ver. 9, 10. Nor was this a privilege peculiar to the apostle ; there is a promise offering it to all Christ's people, Isa. xl. 31. Since Christ has such a feeling of our infirmities, we might be sure he would relieve and strengthen, though he had not promised it. It is some ease to those who do but suffer with others, by way of sympathy and fellow-feeling, to have them eased. Christ himself some way suffers, till his people be relieved. It is through him, and mercy through him, that the promise is made. 'Now that it is promised, both his faithfulness and compassionateness insure the performance.'

If Christ have such a sense of the difficulties we labour under, they need not discourage us ; he will take care we shall not sink under them. He himself is concerned in the pressure, and has a feeling of it.

2. As for dangers and sufferings which attend the profession of Christ, they need be no discouragement. For in that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (sufferings amongst the rest), he suffers with his people therein ; and so they are upon this account (as they are upon others also) his sufferings ; therefore he will order them as his own. Hence we may conclude they will do us no hurt, they shall do us good.

Christ will take care they shall not hurt us ; he will secure us from the evil of them ; and being secured from the evil of them, there is nothing in them to be feared ; nothing to fright us from our profession, any part or degree of it ; nothing to discourage us from persisting in it, and holding it fast.

There is a threefold evil in sufferings : legal, moral, natural.

(1.) A legal evil, and that is the curse. Afflictions, that which we suffer by since the fall, were deserved by sin, threatened by the law, executed by divine justice, to satisfy for the injury sin had done him ; so they become a curse. Christ has freed his people from the curse, by suffering for them, Gal. iii. 13 ; and even those that are chastisements, are now freed from the curse. They are not destructive penalties, they are not from vindictive wrath, they are not to satisfy justice ; and if sufferings for sin be secured from this dreadful evil, sufferings for the profession of Christ are at far further distance from it.

(2.) A moral evil. And that is the sin that sufferings expose us to, which may be occasioned thereby, which those are usually tempted to who are under sufferings.

Now Christ himself, in the days of his suffering, was tempted to sin ; that was one of those infirmities he laboured under, and was exposed to, for our sakes ; and for this end, that he might be touched with the feeling of their condition who are tempted, that he might sympathise with them in the hour of temptation, that he might know by experience their danger and distress, and so both pity and relieve them, Heb. ii. 18. He is hereby every way sufficient, both able and willing to succour the tempted.

He shewed a compassionate sense of their danger of sin under sufferings, and how desirous he is to have them secured from it, by his prayer on earth. It was his petition a little before his death, John xvii. 15. He would not have them taken out of the world, nor freed quite from troubles and sufferings in it ; but freed from the evil, that is, the sin of them. Though troubles continue, though this serpent will live, and be upon us now and then while we are on earth ; yet he takes care that it be disarmed, that the sting be pulled out, that the mortal venom of it may not seize on his suffering saints ; and then there is nothing in it to discourage or make them afraid.

(3.) A natural evil. And that is the smart, the grievance, the pain, and afflictiveness of it to the flesh. This nature is most afraid of ; but the fear and discouragement of this may be quite overcome by a due consideration and belief of this truth. Christ himself suffered this ; he knows by experience what the pain and afflictiveness of sufferings is. He would feel it himself, that he might be touched with the feeling of what his people suffer by it. He knows what relief and compassion it calls for ; and as he would not have been denied it when the case was his, so he will not deny it to his people. Indeed, the case is still his in some sense, seeing he suffers with them, not by a painful, but by a compassionate feeling of their sufferings. Hence we may conclude,

[1.] He will let no more befall us than is tolerable, than we may well endure. He knows the weight and grievance of sufferings ; himself bore it. He knows our weakness and infirmity ; himself was under our weaknesses. He has experience of both, so he knows what degree of pain or grievance would be too much or too heavy ; and since he is touched with the feeling hereof, to be sure he will not suffer us to feel more than we can bear. His compassions are too great to let any grievance be too heavy. If he were not, as we may say, a fellow-sufferer with us, if he had not the compassions of a man for us, yet his faithfulness as God would prevent this, 1 Cor. x. 13. But there is a concurrence of both ; he is both a merciful and faithful high priest.

[2.] He will make what befalls us comfortable. He that cannot fail to pity us will not fail to comfort us. It is so amongst men. He that is heartily touched with the feeling of another's grievances, and really pities his condition, will comfort him if he can. Now Christ, who has such a feeling

of his people's pressures, and has such transcendent compassions for them, he can accordingly comfort them. When sufferings most abound, he can make comforts superabound, 2 Cor. i. 5. He can pour in such comforts as will drown the sense of what is most sharp and afflictive in outward sufferings, 1 Cor. vii. 4; such as will make what is otherwise grievous to the flesh to be exceeding joyous, occasion of more joy than the greatest occasions of rejoicing in the whole world, Rom. viii. 35, 37. What joy like that of a conqueror in the day of his victory or of his triumph? Even in the worst of sufferings, &c., Christ affords more joy than that of conquerors; he makes his suffering people more than conquerors, and so gives more occasion of joy and triumph; they have it through Christ that loves them, that has an affectionate sense of their sufferings.

[8.] He will make what befalls them profitable, highly advantageous. That shall be the issue of the smart and grievance of outward sufferings. This also we may be assured of, in that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is, as I shewed, touched effectually with the feeling. Now such an effectual sense will afford the best relief, the most advantageous, such as is expressed by riches of grace and glory, and what is most desirable, advantage every way.

First. Temporal, Mark x. 30. In this time he shall have an hundredfold advantage; in kind, if that be best for him; or else what is better:

Secondly. Spiritual advantage. The increase of holiness, and the fruits of it, which is more precious than gold, Heb. xii. 10. That we might more richly partake of his holiness, than without sufferings we would do, that we might be more filled with the fruits of it, ver. 11. The apostle found it true by experience, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Holiness was daily increased in his soul by daily sufferings, such as threatened the ruin of the outward man.

Thirdly. Eternal advantage, ver. 17. For affliction, glory; as if one for bearing a cross word patiently should be crowned a king. For light affliction, a weight of glory; as if one, for the loss of a farthing, should have millions of gold. For a moment's affliction, eternal glory; as if one, for the pain of a minute, should have all prosperity and happiness imaginable for thousands and thousands of ages, for ages without end, and that without intermission. But no comparison can reach it. It is *ὑπερβαλλον*, &c., exceeding more, far more exceeding. Put them together in the balance, and that scale wherein the weight of glory is will make the other fly up, as if there were nothing at all in it. The heaviest afflictions are no more a counterpoise to this weight of glory, than the small dust of the balance is to an hundred thousand weight. Christ's feeling of his people's sufferings for their profession, gives assurance of such weighty and rich advantages by the worst they can suffer for holding it fast.

What encouragement then is here to hold fast our profession! No difficulties or sufferings can be any just occasion for discouraging us. Nothing can be pretended but the evil of them; and Christ is ready, not only to secure his people from all kind of evil, but to turn it into good; not only to render it tolerable, but very comfortable, richly advantageous, with the highest advantages that earth or heaven, time or eternity, can afford. All this we may be assured of, in that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

4. Another duty which this truth calls and obliges us to, is to sympathise with one another. If Christ be thus touched with the feeling of our infirmities, then ought we to be touched with the sense of our brethren's infirmities. If the head be thus sensible, shall the members have no sense? 1 John iv. 11, 'If Christ so loved us,' &c. This is propounded not only for

our comfort and encouragement, but also for our imitation, 1 John i. 7. We have not fellowship with one another, as Christ has with us, unless we have a fellow-feeling of what others suffer.

It is due upon this account, and frequently called for: 1 Peter iii. 8, *ὁμόφρονες*. There should be an union of souls amongst those who are one in Christ. They should be compassionate, *συμπάσιν*, should sympathise together; feel what lies heavy on others, and suffer by compassion what others suffer otherwise. Else they are not *φιλάδελφοι*; they have not that love for their brethren, which the love of Christ obliges them to have. They should be pitiful, *ἑσπλάγχνοι*; their bowels should be troubled for that which troubles them, and shew it by being *φιλόφρονες*, ready to relieve. The same word, Acts xxviii. 7, such sympathy, with the acts or parts of it (pity and readiness to succour); and this out of love, as those that are concerned, as being all one, of one mind and soul, we should have for one another, because Christ has it for us, Col. iii. 12, 13. We should sympathise with them in all infirmities; so does he with us.

(1.) In outward infirmities, weaknesses, wants, dangers, sufferings. We should be touched with what others feel herein, 2 Cor. xi. 29. He calls Timothy to partake with him in his danger and restraint, 2 Tim. i. 8. The Hebrews sympathised with him in his bonds. Heb. x. 34, *συμπαθήσατε*, ye suffered with me, &c. He would have them (and us in them) so to suffer with all the members of Christ, Heb. xiii. 3, have that sense of their condition as if it were your own, such a sense as you would others have if the case were yours; and this not only for bonds, but any adversity, 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. If the foot be in pain, the head feels it; if the back be naked, the breast will be sensible of it; if the belly be pinched with want, or the stomach be sick, the other parts will feel it. So should it be with the members of the mystical body. We shall want one main evidence that we are parts of that body whereof Christ is head, if there be not some sense in us of what fellow-members feel. It is schism; you divide yourselves from the rest of the body when you have not a joint sense of what other members suffer. This is to be schismatics in the apostle's sense.

(2.) Inward infirmities. When they are tempted, sympathise with them, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. When dejected, 1 Thes. v. 14. And those that are weak, ready to fall; not only bear with them, but bear them up, take part of the pressure upon yourselves, that they may not sink under it. So does Christ for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.

When weak in judgment, Rom. xv. 1, 3. Ye that understand the doctrine of Christ, that in particular concerning Christian liberty, ought to bear the weakness of those who are not so apprehensive of it; and not to please yourselves with reflecting upon the strength of your own judgment, or clearness of your own apprehensions. And so imitate Christ, ver. 3, counting their concerns yours; as he did the concerns of his Father, was as tender of what reflected on him, as if it had fallen on himself.

(3.) In sinful infirmities, 2 Cor. xi. 29. 'Who is offended,' *i. e.* who falls into sin; for that is the true notion of being offended in the New Testament. So giving of offence is explained, Rom. xiv. 13. Who falls into sin, 'and I burn not,' says he. Such falls were grievous to him, he had a quick and painful feeling thereof; he both suffered by, and with such. Falling into sin is like falling into the fire; not only the offenders, but the apostle, was scorched thereby. So should it be with us, Gal. vi. 1, 2. Do not burden him more, by censuring and aggravating his fault; but ease him, by suffering with him, counting his fall your own burden.

We should sympathise with our brethren, even in infirmities that are not without sin ; whether they be apprehensions or acts, opinions or practices (being but weaknesses incident to those whom Christ owns, and sympathises with) ; we should learn of him to have compassion on them, and affectionately endeavour to succour them.

The consideration of this, that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, is enough to remove whatever may hinder us from a compassionate sense of others' infirmities.

Obj. 1. It is a plain truth wherein he differs from me ; it is evident to me, and seems clear as the light, yet he will not yield to me. If it was obscure and difficult, if it were doubtful and disputable, and had probable reasons both for it and against it, such as might puzzle a common understanding, then I might pity and bear with him.

Ans. It seems clear to thee, but is it so in itself, or so to him ? If it were plain to him, it would be rather wilfulness than infirmity in him not to yield. But is it not possible that you may be mistaken as well as he ? Are you infallible ? Have you not found by experience, that what once you have judged a clear truth, you have afterwards discerned to be a mistake and error ? Who is there that makes any diligent inquiry after truth, that has not found this by experience ? Now, were not you to be pitied in those misapprehensions, wherein you now discover a pitiful weakness ? What if the world had agreed with you, yielded to you in this, in those first opinions, wherein you now see reason to differ from yourselves ? Did you not need Christ's compassions in such weaknesses ? And will you have no tenderness for others, in such cases where you need it yourselves.

But, further, Do not you differ in some points from Christ himself ? Are your judgments perfectly conformable to his in all things ? May there not be some particulars, which to you seem clear truths, which yet he knows infallibly to be mistakes and erroneous apprehensions ? It would argue intolerable pride, and unacquaintedness with the darkness and weakness of our own understanding to question this. Now, would you not have Christ to pity and bear with you, in points wherein you dissent from him ? Would you not have Christ to judge, that in all things where you are not of his mind (which yet are clear to him beyond all possibility of mistake), your mistake is out of wilfulness, not infirmity, and so should have no pity for you ? Oh, if he did so, you were undone ! Miserable must we all be, if Christ were not touched compassionately with the feeling of our weakness, in varying from his judgment as to those things that are most clear and certain truths to him. And do we expect compassion from him, where we have no forbearance for others ? Are we disciples of Christ, and will not learn of him ?

Obj. 2. But it is not a few things wherein he crosses my persuasion. If he differed but from me in one or two points, it might be borne ; but he runs counter to my way and judgment in many.

Ans. But does he differ from you in more, or as many particulars, as you dissent from Christ in ? I am much mistaken if this be not true ; that even the sincere lovers of Christ and his truth differ in far more points from Christ, than they differ one from another. This leads me to judge so ; there are many things that we know not ; the best, most knowing, are ignorant of far more than they understand ; and those things that we have any knowledge of, we know but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, and viii. 2 ; we partly know it, and partly are ignorant of it, 1 Cor. xiii. 12 ; we see but darkly, i. e. we know but ignorantly, as children do, ver. 11.

Now, where there is ignorance (if the mind come to any positive judg-

ment), there will be error and mistake; so that, being wholly ignorant of many things, and partly ignorant of all, we are subject to err more or less in all things. Hence it comes to pass, that the errors of our minds are like those of our ways for multitude: Ps. xix. 12, 'They are so many, we cannot know them. Our mistakes are in number like the hairs of our heads.

Now, so many ways as we mistake and err, so many ways do we dissent from Christ, and run cross to his judgment and persuasion. And has Christ compassion on thee and all these? Is he touched with the feeling of thy weakness in all? And wilt thou not forbear thy brother in some differences? What though they seem many, they are but few really, in comparison of those wherein thou dissentest from Christ; and wherein, if thou meetest not with pity and succour from him, thou art lost.

Obj. 3. But those opinions wherein he differs from me are of very ill consequence. They are not mere notions, or speculative errors, but practical mistakes, such as lead him out of the way wherein I walk, and Christ would have him walk; and may mislead others into wanderings and by-paths. And though they be not paths pernicious and destructive, but such as those who, for the main, are under the conduct of the Spirit of Christ, may slip into, yet they are not without some sin and great danger. Erroneous speculations may be better borne with than practical errors.

Ans. Christ has compassions for those who not only err notionally, but practically, so as to step out of the way, and wander too. Herein he is compared with the Levitical high priest, of whom it was required, Heb. v. 2. Christ herein transcends him. He can more pity, both ἀγνοῦσι and πλανώμενοι; both those who are in the dark, and apt to wander, not discerning betwixt light and darkness in their notions; and those also who mistake their way, turn aside, and are actually wandering out of the path.

Now, does Christ compassionately sympathise with thee and others, when out of the way by practical mistakes; and wilt thou have no tenderness, no forbearance for thy brother in the like case? Shall he have compassionate sympathy, proportionable to the wandering (so the word there signifies) as great as the mistake is; and wilt thou think it too great for thine? What if Christ should measure to thee what thou metest to others?

Obj. 4. But he is sour, cross, froward, peevish, wilful, puts a bad construction upon my forbearance and condescensions, makes ill returns, gives great provocations when I give him no occasion, and every way disoblige me. This calls for severeness, or rougher passions than pity. Who can affectionately sympathise with such a one? Who can shew compassionate tenderness towards him? It is unreasonable to expect it, it is impossible to do it; who ever did, who can do it?

Ans. Who can do it? dost thou ask. Why, Christ does it for thee.

(1.) When thou carriest thyself worse towards him than thy brother does to thee. There is not any one in the world shews himself so sour, cross, &c., so disingenuous, so provoking, so ungrateful, so every way disoblige, as thou hast shewed thyself to Christ. There is not the most perverse, the most cross-grained person, that ever thou hadst anything to do with, that has demeaned himself worse to thee, than thou hast done to Christ. Thou art wofully blinded by self-love; thou art one of no consideration, of no sense, if not sensible of this. Thou knowest not Christ, thou knowest not thyself, thine own heart and ways, if thou wilt not acknowledge this.

(2.) Yea, take them altogether, that ever dealt ill with thee, all that ever thou hast had any occasion to complain of; and thou alone hast dealt worse with Christ, and done more against him, than all of them together have done against thee.

(8.) Where thou hast had one provocation from any, Christ has had an hundred from thee. You disoblige Christ more in one day, than others do you in a whole year.

(4.) And provocations of Christ are not only more in number, but greater, and of a higher nature; as much higher as the heavens are above the earth; as much greater, as God is greater than man; for the height of the provocation rises from the transcendency of the person provoked. He that provokes you is but a man like yourselves, but Christ is not only man, but God, and we are less to him than flies and gnats are to us. And the less we are in his eye, the greater and more insufferable is every provocation from us.

(5.) And all this thou doest when he gives thee not the least occasion to deal ill with him, when all his ways are mercy, when he is every moment obliging thee, and does so much to oblige thee as no creature in the world can or will do.

Now, put all these together. Have you been worse to him than any other has been to you? Have you more disoblige him than you have been disoblige by all the persons in the world put together? Has he had a thousand provocations from you for one you have had from any? Are your provocations incomparably greater and higher than any you have met with from others? And do you provoke him without a cause, when he gives you not the least occasion imaginable to do it? And yet notwithstanding all this, does he not only bear with you, but pity you? Has he tender affections, when he has so much occasion for indignation and severity? Is he touched with the feeling of your infirmities? Has he a compassionate tenderness for you after all this? And will you not have sympathy and tenderness for your brethren? Oh this example of Christ will leave us without excuse herein; we have nothing to plead, but this will silence us. Nothing at all left us, I say not to justify, but in any degree to extenuate, the sinfulness of this neglect.

You see all that may hinder us from sympathising with our brethren is quite removed by Christ's own example, here set down before us in the text. Let us see what it affords to enforce this duty on us further.

(1.) Hereby you will be like to Christ, and to be like to Christ is the highest excellency we can attain; it is the sum of all our duty, and so should be the end and scope of all our endeavours, the great design and business of our whole life.

What higher excellency can we aspire to than a likeness to Christ? Revenge is that indeed wherein the world glories, to do evil for evil, and come even with those who affront or wrong them; but this they learn of the devil, not of Christ. It is a devilish deformity; they have it of their father, and are herein as like him as they can look. But the glory of a Christian is to do good for evil, to pity those they suffer by, and to sympathise with such as disoblige them. This is glorious indeed; this is to be like to Christ himself; it is his glory, and shines in the text; it is the excellency of his office, as he is High Priest, Philip. ii. 5. While the same mind is in others that is in the world, that is in the devil, it will be our glory to have 'the same mind in us that was in Christ,' by having a sense of others' wants, weaknesses, dangers, sufferings, as Christ has of ours.

It is our great duty also. Christ calls us to it: Mat. xi., 'Learn of me.' It is essential to a disciple of Christ to learn of him; if we refuse it, whatever we pretend to, we really disclaim, renounce our relation to him, Mat. xvi. 24. If we will be his disciples, we must follow him; we must imitate him, follow his example, for he has left us his example on purpose, 1 Peter

ii. 21. This is one of the paths wherein he went before us. We see in the text the steps which we must follow : Eph. iv. 32 and v. 1, 2, 'tender-hearted,' *ἡσπλάγχνης*.

That is the compassionateness the text calls for ; shew it in such acts as he has done. Be ye followers, imitators of him herein ; walk in love. How ? Even as Christ. Christ shews his love in being touched, &c. ; so do ye. This is to follow God ; this is to learn of Christ effectually. So he begins the exhortation to the duties following, and this particularly, chap. iv. 20, 21. Ye have not so learned Christ ; ye do not follow him, ye are not like him, if ye do not this ; ye have not put on the new man, which is Christ's resemblance, ver. 24. If this be wholly wanting, Col. iii. 12, 13, put on *σπλάγχνα δικαιοσύνης*, bowels of compassion. Shew it as Christ did ; let him be your example ; let no *μομφή*, nothing that you can blame or find fault with in those who want your compassion, hinder you, ver. 14. Love to others, founded in the love of Christ to you, is the bond of perfectness ; the most perfect bond, that which most strongly binds and obliges you to this ; to all mercifulness and compassionateness, in imitation of Christ.

Use 2. For comfort to the people of Christ. Here is ground of great consolation in every condition ; in the worst, the most grievous circumstances that you can be compassed with in this world. All grievances whatsoever are comprised under infirmities ; and this affords comfort as to everything that can be a grievance to you, especially taking in the ground of it in the next words, 'But was in all things tempted,' or exercised, like unto us.

Art thou poor, wantest conveniences, and sometimes (it may be) necessities ? Why, Christ is touched with the feeling of a poor condition ; it was once his own case, 2 Cor. viii. 9 ; poor in relations, Philip. ii. 7. As to friends, a few fishermen ; as to estate, he had not wherewith to pay a small tribute, but what he got by miracle ; as to accommodations, worse provided for than the inferior creatures, Mat. viii. 20. Christ is touched with the sense of thy poor condition, for he himself felt it ; he will relieve thee, for therefore did he feel it, that he might be ready to do it.

Art thou tempted to sin, buffeted by Satan, afflicted with horrid suggestions ? Christ is touched with the feeling of a tempted soul ; he himself was exercised with temptation. Satan assaulted him both invisibly and visibly ; he tried him with variety of temptations. And what more horrid suggestion than that, to fall down and worship the devil ? Mat. iv. Yea, Christ was so far in his power, and at his disposal, in the hour of temptation, that Satan carried him from place to place in the air, from the wilderness to the temple at Jerusalem, and from thence into a high mountain, Mat. iv. 1, 5, 8.

Art thou despised, hated, reproached, despitefully used ? He is touched with the sense of this ; it was his own case. He was reviled as a glutton, a wine-bibber, an impostor, a blasphemer, and one that dealt with the devil. He knows what it is to be overwhelmed with shame and reproach, his own experience makes him sensible of it.

Is this world a vale of trouble and tears to thee ? Is thy life a life of sorrows and sufferings ? Dost thou suffer from all sorts, not only from professed enemies, but those whom thou seekest most to oblige ? Art thou in anguish of spirit, heaviness of soul, forsaken of men, and to sense deserted of God ? Why, thus it was with him, he himself felt all this. So there is no doubt but he is touched with the feeling of it. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with griefs, with all sorts of grief. He suffered from all sorts ; not only his enemies, but his friends, were a trouble to him. Even his disciples forsook him in his greatest distress. He was afflicted with outward

pain and soul-trouble both at once; his soul was heavy, exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; and when he was in the hands of cruel and bloody men, he cries out in the anguish of his soul, as one forsaken of God.

Briefly, whatever thy trouble or grievance be, here is a spring, a well of comfort opened to thee in the text, from whence thou mayest draw streams of joy and refreshment in all the sad circumstances of thy life, for hence thou hast ground to conclude assuredly,

(1.) That the Lord delights not in your grievances. He takes no pleasure to afflict you, or to let others do it; he 'afflicts not willingly,' Lam. iii. 33; he delights not in that which he has such a compassionate sense of; he takes no pleasure in that which is afflictive to you, for he himself feels it.

How comes it then to pass that the troubles of the righteous are so many? Why, there is some necessity for it; it is not but 'if need be,' 1 Peter i.; there is some great advantage to be had by it, and this is the method which infinite wisdom counts best for the attaining of it. Otherwise, if it were not necessary, if it were not good, he would not suffer it, since he some way suffers by it; it is not the suffering that pleases him, the same thing cannot in the same respect be the object both of delight and commiseration. Christ has compassions on you herein, so far as he suffers with you. He takes no pleasure in what is grievous to you, for himself feels it. Acts vii. 34, 'I have seen, I have seen,' says the Lord; I have felt, I have felt, says Christ, the affliction, &c.

(2.) You are not alone in any condition, in any grievance, be it want or weakness, danger or suffering; you will always have one by you to sympathise with you, one who stands for more than all the world. This was the comfort wherewith Christ comforted himself, when he was like to be left destitute of all outward comforts and comforters, John xvi. 32. This is it which will secure you against the evil of any want, or weakness, or trouble, how great soever; yea, against all fear of it, Ps. xxiii. 4, Isa. xli. 10, &c. That which need not be your fear need not be your trouble. You need fear nothing if Christ be with you. And this the text assures you of, he will be with you; not only as a spectator, but as a co-sufferer; as one that not only will see, but will feel, what you want, or what you endure. Oh what comfort is it to consider this! While I am in want, in pain, in distress, labouring under weaknesses, or conflicting with outward troubles, inward temptation; while I am complaining and bemoaning myself, Christ is pitying me. His bowels yearn towards me, he feels what pinches me, he is affectionately touched with the feeling of it.

(3.) You shall have his affection in every state, under all infirmities. The mind and heart of Christ will be upon you in every condition, under all weaknesses, in all wants, in all grievances. For this is a proposition of eternal truth, Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. This will hold true in every moment of your lives, Christ's compassions fail not; and while he has compassions, he has love, and all the affections that depend on love. So that, whatever you want, Christ will never want love for you; you will never want his love. And what need you more? What want is there in the world that his love will not make up? Whatever you suffer, you will not lose his love; and there is enough in his compassion, in his love, to make any grievance better than freedom from it; to make any condition, how necessitous, weak, afflictive soever, more comfortable, more advantageous, more desirable, than any exemption from it, when this is not from love. Will he love you less, because you are compassed with infirmities? Will he not shew more love? The more compassion is shewed, the more love appears. And he shews most compassion where there is most need; and who need more than they that labour under most infirmities?

4. You shall have that which is best for you in your infirmities ; and nothing can be more comfortable than to be assured of what is best for you. If it be best to have your infirmities, the burdened lessened, he will do it. If it be best that they be continued, with support under them, you shall have that. If it be better to have a holy and fruitful improvement of them, than to be freed from them, you shall have that. If it be best to have deliverance from them, he will work it ; as soon as it is so, he will not delay it. This you may be sure of, because he is touched, &c. For this is not the pity of a weak man, who may wish well to him he pities, but cannot help ; may be willing to do what is best for him, but is not able ; but it is the compassion of him, who is the mighty God. Indeed, he is both God and man, who is thus touched with the sense of our condition. And so it is the compassion of a man, for the tenderness of it, but the compassion of God, for the mighty power and efficacy of it.

This assures us that he is both able and willing to afford the best relief, and this is by doing that which is best for us.