

Paul's Disinterestedness (Unselfishness).

by Thomas Reade

Thomas Reade's sermon on Paul's Disinterestedness highlights the Apostle's unselfish love and dedication to the spiritual welfare of others.

Topics: "Christian Character", "Selfless Love"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about Paul's disinterestedness, parental solicitude for his spiritual children, self-renunciation, and Christian forbearance with weak brethren. Paul's character exemplifies a deep commitment to the Gospel, sacrificial love, and unwavering dedication to the spiritual well-being of others. His humility, selflessness, and perseverance in the face of opposition serve as a model for all believers to follow, reflecting the love and compassion of Christ. Reade emphasizes the importance of imitating Paul's virtues in our own lives, showing genuine love, patience, and forgiveness towards others, even in the midst of challenges and misunderstandings.

Transcript

PAUL'S DISINTERESTEDNESS (unselfishness).

HIS PARENTAL SOLICITUDE FOR HIS SPIRITUAL CHILDREN.

HIS SELF-RENUNCIATION.

HIS CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE WITH WEAK BRETHREN.

Disinterestedness formed a beautiful feature in the character of Paul. It is the appointment of God, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; as the Jewish priests, who ministered about holy things, lived of the things of the temple. It is also due from a principle of equity, that those who devote their time and talents for the spiritual good of others, should be preserved, by a suitable maintenance, from those anxieties and cares which necessarily attend worldly business. This equitable provision is clearly ordained of God, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, that the faithful minister may be enabled, with more unfettered spirit, to pursue the arduous labors of his office. "We have planted good spiritual seed among you. Is it too much to ask, in return, for mere food and clothing? Those who are taught the word of God should help their teachers by paying them."

When Paul succeeded, through the grace of God, in forming a church, both Jews and Gentiles instantly united to crush this little company of believers; while some accused him of self-interested motives, as if he

only sought a livelihood among the newly converted Heathen. This accusation led him to refuse repeated offers of assistance, that he might cut off occasion from them who thus desired an occasion to misrepresent him. He therefore said to the elders of Ephesus- "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to those who were with me." Though he had a full right, as a minister of Christ, to the support of Christian believers, for whose sake he expended all his strength; yet from the peculiar state of the infant Church, he made this disinterested declaration- "I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Nothing could be farther removed from the heart of the Apostle than self-seeking, and the love of what he designated filthy lucre. The man who could say, "I die daily;" whose desire was to depart, and to be with Christ; whose affections were set on things above; and whose life was hidden with Christ in God; would feel no hankering after the perishing honors and riches of the world. His appeal to the church of Corinth is a striking specimen of that eloquence of the heart, which flows from a feeling of conscious integrity- "The only thing I didn't do, which I do in the other churches, was to become a burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong! Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have; I want you. And anyway, little children don't pay for their parents' food. It's the other way around; parents supply food for their children. I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me."

Nothing but the power of the Spirit of Christ, could have produced a feeling so completely opposed to every principle of our fallen nature. "I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you," is the language of warm affection. It is the expression of an entire surrender of ourselves for the good of those whom we tenderly love; as the Apostle said to the Philippians, "If I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; for the same cause also, do you joy and rejoice with me." But to say, "I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me," -is a glorious triumph over the pride and selfishness of the human heart.

O! that we could see among professing Christians, more of this unwearied, this disinterested love. To possess this grace is to resemble Christ, who went about doing good, even to the evil and unthankful; who prayed for his enemies; who laid down his life for his murderers; and who has left us an example that we should follow his steps. Without this heavenly principle of love, which suffers long and is kind, we shall soon grow weary in well-doing, especially, if our labors be requited with ingratitude. To retaliate injuries is the work of pride; to bear them meekly, is the fruit of humility. He, who is saved by infinite mercy, will cheerfully forgive an offending brother. The spirit of the Gospel is love. Happy is the man whose soul is cast into this heavenly mold, and receives the image of Him, who is love.

The faithful minister of the Gospel is often called to spend his strength among a people, who, so far from valuing his exertions for their spiritual good, oppose him in every possible way. Yet, he goes on laboring with unwearied patience in the midst of every discouragement. His motives being misjudged, and his character maligned, still, in the strength of that Savior who sees the sincerity of his heart, he perseveres in his work of mercy. Knowing the value of souls, and the grace of Jesus, he is determined to endure every trial, though the more abundantly he loves, the less he be loved. This holy perseverance does not, in general, lose its reward. The Lord blesses such a patient exercise of faith and hope, both to the shepherd and his flock. Many opposers of the Truth are led, through the Spirit, to submit their wills to Jesus, and to

love the man, through whose persevering meekness and unwearied forbearance, they have been brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

May each Christian reader, while holding before himself the mirror of Divine Truth, be enabled to discover his own character. Have you, like the disinterested Paul, this holy love to the Gospel of Christ? Can you labor for the salvation of sinners, though your labors be requited with ingratitude and contempt? Do you esteem all things which nature admires, as loss for Christ? Is your heart powerfully drawn toward the people of God, and do you love them, because they are the members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Spirit? What are your views of sin? Is it beheld as rebellion against God? as the crucifier of Christ? Is it hated, opposed, and more and more destroyed within you? Is holiness the sacred atmosphere in which you delight to live? Can you say with the heavenly-minded Apostle, I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ? Do you esteem it your heaven, to be with Christ, to be made like him, and forever to behold his glory. If, with the deep feeling of humility and self-abasement before God, your heart can assent to these important questions, then rejoice, yes, again and again rejoice; for He who has begun this good work in you, will carry it on, and perfect it to his own everlasting praise.

True faith, from its very nature, must influence the heart, and cause the fruits of holiness to spring up and abound. When genuine, it works by love and is never satisfied with any present measure, but is always panting after an increase; since He, who imparts it, is infinite and inexhaustible, and has declared, "Whoever has, to him shall more be given; and he shall have more abundance."

PARENTAL SOLICITUDE was an interesting trait in the character of the Apostle. Fearing lest his humiliating sufferings, which he so feelingly described to the Corinthian Christians, should make them ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he says in his Epistle to that church, "I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. So I ask you to follow my example and do as I do. That is the very reason I am sending Timothy--to help you do this. For he is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord. He will remind you of what I teach about Christ Jesus in all the churches wherever I go."

Where is the zealous minister of Christ who does not meet with trials, among the very people, for whose welfare he is expending all his strength? This holy man had innumerable trials, and those arising from false brethren were not among the least. Pursuing his former appeal to their hearts, he adds; "I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again. But I will come--and soon--if the Lord will let me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God's power. For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power. Which do you choose? Should I come with punishment and scolding, or should I come with quiet love and gentleness?"

His parental fears were greatly excited for the Corinthian converts. He saw among them much to commend and much to blame. With what faithfulness does he set before them his holy apprehensions "I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. For I promised you as a pure bride to one husband, Christ. But I fear that somehow you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to Christ, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent."

Though at a distance from Colosse, he was equally alive to the dangers which surrounded the Christians in that city, from the storms of persecution. He therefore writes, "I want you to know how much I have

agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other friends who have never known me personally. My goal is that they will be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have full confidence because they have complete understanding of God's secret plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

With the same fatherly spirit, he exhorted the Hebrew Christians, "Be careful then, dear friends. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ."

It is truly beautiful to behold this combination of tenderness with that honest plain-dealing which will not allow sin to remain unrepented upon a Christian brother. The divinely-taught Apostle was well acquainted with the deceitfulness of the heart and the devices of Satan. He knew the dangers which accompany both the smiles and the frowns of the world, having himself experienced both. His anxieties were, therefore, never dormant, respecting those young believers in Jesus, whose faith might be shaken through the afflictions attendant upon a zealous profession of the Gospel.

Another striking instance of his solicitude is afforded us in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, "Finally, when we could stand it no longer, we decided that I should stay alone in Athens, and we sent Timothy to visit you. He is our co-worker for God and our brother in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith, and to keep you from becoming disturbed by the troubles you were going through. But, of course, you know that such troubles are going to happen to us Christians. Even while we were with you, we warned you that troubles would soon come--and they did, as you well know. That is why, when I could bear it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out whether your faith was still strong. I was afraid that the Tempter had gotten the best of you and that all our work had been useless. Now Timothy has just returned, bringing the good news that your faith and love are as strong as ever. He reports that you remember our visit with joy and that you want to see us just as much as we want to see you. So we have been greatly comforted, dear friends, in all of our own crushing troubles and suffering, because you have remained strong in your faith. It gives us new life, knowing you remain strong in the Lord."

Then; with expanded heart, he breaks forth into the most joyous thanksgivings to God- "How we thank God for you! Because of you we have great joy in the presence of God. Night and day we pray earnestly for you, asking God to let us see you again to fill up anything that may still be missing in your faith. May God himself, our Father, and our Lord Jesus make it possible for us to come to you very soon."

Like the gardener, he was most solicitous about his tender plants; and labored to screen them from the nipping blast. By faith and prayer, he daily committed them to Him, who died to redeem them by his blood; and felt assured, that He, who had called them by his grace, would preserve them unto his kingdom and glory.

No one had a clearer perception than Paul of the sovereignty of Divine Grace, and the stability of the Divine Promises; yet this did not cause him to relax in his endeavors, by all possible means, to guard believers against the subtlety of Satan, the snares of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin.

He knew the inseparable connection there is between the means and the end; that the one, as well as the other, is divinely ordained. To the ship's crew he said, "There shall be no loss of any man's life among

you," -and yet he added, "Unless these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved."

His constant warning therefore was, "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. Do not be high-minded, but fear. Let no man deceive himself." How many err in practical religion by following human theories, instead of the Word of God. The purposes of Jehovah, which are secret to us, do not release us from the performance of revealed duties. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Therefore, whenever we meet with a plain precept, we should simply endeavor to obey it, without tarrying to enquire into God's hidden purpose.

SELF-RENUNCIATION was a prominent feature in the conduct of Paul. Self was swallowed up in that one great object, to promote which all his desires centered- Christ and Him Crucified. He was willing to be esteemed as nothing, so that Christ might be all and in all. The glory of Jesus was his constant aim, to hold him forth in all his excellencies was his delight, though, in so doing, he should be esteemed by the worldly wise, and the great ones of the earth, as a fool for Christ's sake. Thus, with beautiful humility, he told the Corinthians, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

In his Epistle to the Philippians we have a most interesting instance of this victory over selfish feeling- "And I want you to know, dear friends, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including all the soldiers in the palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, many of the Christians here have gained confidence and become more bold in telling others about Christ."

How cheering it must have been to the Apostle, in the midst of his sufferings, to behold the Gospel making its conquests in the palace of Caesar! At the close of this Epistle he says, "All the saints salute you, chiefly those who are of Caesar's household." Oh! that every palace may be illuminated by the Truth of the Gospel, and by the holy lives of its possessors. Happy is that nation where God is known in its palaces as a sure refuge; where its king is a nursing father, and its queen a nursing mother to his Church. Happy is that nation which is in such a case; yes, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.

That the bonds of the Apostle should have emboldened others to speak the word without fear, when the natural effect might have been intimidation, was a cause for thankfulness. But in the midst of these encouragements, he had to notice, what to many would have been a painful trial, "Some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know the Lord brought me here to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. But whether or not their motives are pure, the fact remains that the message about Christ is being preached, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and as the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will all turn out for my deliverance."

Grace shines with peculiar luster in this generous feeling of his heart. No malice, no retaliating passion of envy, or ill-will was awakened in his bosom. All his desire was that Christ should be preached and sinners saved. Did any envy his success, or seek to lessen him in the esteem of others? -he bore it with patience. Did they preach Christ as the only Savior of sinners? -he could, and did rejoice, even though they preached Christ out of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds.

Self was sacrificed to the glory of the Redeemer. This humble servant of Christ felt no keen solicitude about his own reputation, if only the riches of pardoning love, through a crucified Jesus, were proclaimed to the world.

Does our Christian experience accord with this beautiful spirit and temper of the Apostle? Those only are disciples indeed, who have the mind of Christ, and who resemble him in his humility, self-denial, and love. What a glorious object would the Christian Church be, yes, the joy of the whole earth, if all its professing members were filled with that charity which suffers long and is kind; if they were clothed with that lowliness of mind, which causes each to esteem others better than themselves. O that sovereign grace may produce in rich abundance these peaceable fruits of righteousness- and hasten on that blissful period, when Jesus will reign in the hearts of all his people, and bless the earth from the rising to the setting sun.

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE, was another lovely excellence in the Apostle. Understanding well the glorious liberty of the Gospel, he could bear, with much patience, the prejudices of weaker brethren.

How seldom do old established Christians make sufficient allowance for the inexperience and infirmities of young believers, whose minds, just opening to the Truth, have not attained to the stability of the Christian character.

Toward these babes in Christ, much tenderness should be manifested, and much solicitude exercised, as the mother watches over the first steps of her infant. This lovely part of the Apostle's character is displayed in the following exhortations, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. So don't condemn each other anymore. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian's path. We who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself. Give none offence, either to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. If what I eat is going to make another Christian sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live--for I don't want to make another Christian stumble."

Living, as we do, in a Christian country, we have not to encounter the Jewish distinctions of foods and drinks; nor to experience the offence of food offered unto idols; yet the duties of charity, forbearance, and self-denial are of perpetual obligation, and in one way or other are called into daily exercise. Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.

This was the truly charitable practice of the Apostle; "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; All things are lawful for me, (meaning no doubt things in themselves indifferent) but I will not be brought under the power of any. I keep under by body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Thus, while he conscientiously abstained from whatever might offend the weakest of his brethren, he most carefully avoided, whatever would injure his own soul.

But here the line must be distinctly drawn; for, while we yield to the prejudices of weaker brethren, we must never make sinful compliances to conciliate the people of the world. Jesus said to his disciples, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

If, then, we try to recommend religion, or to remove the prejudice of worldly people, by departing in any instance from our proper character as professing Christians, we deceive ourselves, and discover great

defect both in principal and judgment. The apostolic injunction is, "you must live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, as citizens of heaven. Let your speech be always with grace. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Hence our duty is plain; for though we cannot always discourse upon spiritual things; yet, we must always speak in the spirit of the Gospel; and though we cannot always be engaged in religious exercises, yet, our light must so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

As believing Christians, we must never conceal our principles, nor shrink from an open confession of our faith. If we call Jesus Lord, we are bound to honor him, by a cheerful obedience to his will, whatever harm it may bring upon us. Sinful compliances are never blessed of God to the conviction or conversion of ungodly people; but often end in the confusion of those who make them.

It may however be asked, did not Paul say, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some?" He did- and his language to the Corinthian church is peculiarly striking, "This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings."

From his whole spirit and conduct, it is evident, that what he conceded either to Jews or Gentiles, were things which did not in the slightest degree affect the fundamentals of the Gospel. Unlike the Pharisees, he would not strain at a gnat and swallow a camel; or tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, while he neglected the weightier matters of the Law.

The religion of Paul was the religion of the heart -a religion of truth and love. Though he could bear with the infirmities of the weak, yet, with uncompromising firmness, he maintained the purity of the Gospel. Of this, he has given us two striking instances, which are highly characteristic of his charity and decision. He told the Galatians, who were drawn away by Judaizing teachers from the truth of the Gospel, that he had opposed the circumcision of Titus (he being a Gentile) lest the doctrine of justification by faith should appear to be renounced; and assured them, that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing. While, in perfect consistency with this conduct, he took Timothy, (his mother being a Jewess) and circumcised him, with the simple view of rendering him more acceptable, and his ministry more successful among the Jews. Thus he made a judicious and important distinction, between the essentials and the non-essentials of religion.

Acting on this principle, when Gentiles were converted to the faith of Christ, he could receive them as brethren, and eat and lodge with them, in opposition to the deeply-rooted prejudices of the Jewish nation. And this he did, from his comprehensive view of Christian liberty, which, while it delivered him from the bondage of the ceremonial Law, led him to delight in the expansive spirit of the Gospel.

In his Epistle to the Corinthians he gives us abundant proof of his utter aversion to a party spirit, which, engendering strife and schism, rends and disfigures the body of Christ. With enlarged heart he loved all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and cheerfully conformed, for the

sake of unity and peace, to any custom which compromised no Gospel principle, militated against no Gospel doctrine, and lowered no Gospel precept.

With enlightened mind he beheld the Christian dispensation in its native glory, consisting, not in foods and drinks, not in forms and ceremonies, not in human systems and opinions, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

With holy delight he saw the blessing of Abraham descend on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that they, as well as the Jews, might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. With fervent desire he thus expressed himself to the church of Rome; "So I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am fully convinced, dear friends, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well that you are able to teach others all about them. Even so, I have been bold enough to emphasize some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder from me. For I am, by God's grace, a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News and offer you up as a fragrant sacrifice to God so that you might be pure and pleasing to him by the Holy Spirit."

Entering fully into the design of the Gospel, which, like the leaves of the Tree of Life, is for the healing of the nations, he was ready to become all things to all men; and to seek the profit of many, that they might be saved. Few, comparatively, attain to this exalted standard of Christian Experience; for "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

To love the Gospel for its own sake, and to love those who live under its sanctifying influence, though in minor things they differ from us, is to imbibe the catholic spirit of Paul. The exclusive love of our own party, which closes our hearts against those who follow not with us, even though they be the followers of Christ, is the very bane of Christian unity, and the prolific source of evil.

Happy indeed will that period be, when the envy of Ephraim shall depart- when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim- when all the tribes of the Lord shall love as brethren, and unite with one mind and heart. in promoting the glory of Jehovah!

Much wisdom and love, much faithfulness and forbearance, are required in the ministers of Christ Their whole spirit and life should be a commentary upon the Word which they preach.

This holy conformity to the Gospel should also be visible in all who profess to believe in Jesus. It was so with many of the Corinthians. With what joy could the Apostle declare; "But the only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves! Your lives are a letter written in our hearts, and everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. Clearly, you are a letter from Christ prepared by us. It is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on stone, but on human hearts."

Also, over many of the Thessalonians he was much comforted, "You yourselves became an example to all the Christians in Greece. And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Greece, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it"

A character, so opposite in principle and practice, to that which the world admires, is the work of Almighty Power. "If any man among you," says the Apostle, "seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool,

that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

However much an ungodly world may despise the faithful ambassador of Christ, there is a sanctity of spirit, a purity of purpose, an energy of action, displayed in his character, which mark him out as a chosen vessel; as one whom Jesus delights to honor.

How important are the titles which he bears in the Word of God- a pastor, a teacher, a steward, a watchman, a builder, a laborer. How incessant his care, his wisdom, his fidelity, his vigilance, his exertion. Who can estimate the value of such a man, whose life is thus devoted to the cause of Truth? We should honor him, as the glory of the churches, and the messenger of Christ. We should esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake.

"Nature teaches us to love our benefactors, and the grace of God will inspire a particular affection to those who have been the instruments of our spiritual good. Indifference to the people and interests of the ministers of religion proceeds from indifference to religion itself, and may be justly considered as a proof, that those in whom this temper prevails, have not experienced the peace and comfort which the instructions and exhortations of the faithful servants of Jesus Christ communicate to believers."

The jailor at Philippi, when converted to the faith of Christ, overflowed with gratitude to the instruments of his conversion. "He took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Lydia, when she was baptized and her household, besought these honored servants of Christ, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come in to my house and abide there. And she constrained them." To Gaius, John writes, "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do, to the brethren and to strangers; which have borne witness of your charity before the church."

If the ministerial character be so elevated; if the work to be achieved be so arduous; if the stream of opposition rolling against it be so powerful; well might the holy Apostle exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Truly God only can give, what may emphatically be called a minister's heart. Such a heart of devotedness to Christ, was imparted to Paul; and such a heart of faithfulness and love dwells in all, who are truly called by his grace, to serve Him in the Gospel of his Son.

"O! for that flame of living fire

Which shone so bright in saints of old;

Which bade their souls to heaven aspire,

Calm in distress, in danger bold.

Where is that spirit, Lord, which dwelt

In Abraham's breast, and sealed him thine;

Which made Paul's heart with sorrow melt,

And glow with energy divine?

That Spirit, which from age to age

Proclaimed your love, and taught your ways;
Brightened Isaiah's vivid page,
And breathed in David's hallowed lays?
Is not your grace as mighty now
As when Elijah felt its power;
When glory beamed from Moses' brow,
Or Job endured the trying hour?
Remember, Lord, the ancient days;
Renew your work, your grace restore;
Warm our cold hearts to prayer and praise,
And teach us how to love you more."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-reade/pauls-disinterestedness-unselfishness/>

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