

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST

by Octavius Winslow

The Disinterestedness of Christ's Sympathy

"For even Christ did not please Himself." Romans 15:3

I. The selfishness of sinful man.

No single principle of His own religion did our Lord more perfectly embody or more touchingly illustrate than its disinterested benevolence. The nature which, sinless He assumed, yet whose sinfulness He came to remove, was essentially and totally disorganized. To affirm, as the Scriptures of truth positively do, that it is originally and totally depraved, is but to portray it with every feature of its pristine nobleness, purity, and excellence utterly spoiled. When, therefore, our Lord made His advent to our world, He found man the living embodiment, the acting impersonation, the very incarnation of fallen self-love; self-love in the form of complete selfishness. The original Center of the soul forsaken, man had become a center to himself. The God he worshipped, was the deification of- self. The religion he professed, was the adoration of- self. The powers he cultivated were consecrated to- self. His whole existence was one act of service and devotion to- self. The Divine Center, as we have said, abandoned, he knew no other God, acknowledged no other sufficiency, recognized no other end than- himself. Every faculty and thought, every affection and action, was made to contribute to the cloud of incense which rose as in one dense column before this little idol- SELF. Himself the first- himself the last- himself all in all! And is it not so now? Self, in some shape, is still the Deity of the natural man. Selfishness is still the universal sin of our nature, exhibited in one or more of its thousand modifications, its endless forms. All are in pursuit either of wealth, or ambition, or pleasure, or honor, or gratification- each one urging his individual suit- under the rule of this "reigning law of the world ravaged and disorganized by sin"- the law of selfishness. A total disregard for the interests and enjoyment of others- an entire oblivion of what is due to another's feelings and well-being; the possession of a certain good; the attainment of a certain end at the expense of another's happiness and rights, is the only recognized principle and a rule of action which regulates the conduct of the great majority of our depraved species. The indictment is heavy, the picture is dark, the sin is awful, we admit; but it is borne out as much by daily observation and frequent experience, as by the faithful, unerring Word of God- "All men seek their own." What means this self-exaltism- this egotism- this envy and jealousy- this attempt to supplant others in esteem, influence, and power- this prodigality and love of worldly show- this eager chase of wealth- this covetousness and penuriousness- this niggardly dole of charity- this cruel, heartless, grinding oppression- this growing sensuality and crime- this haughty inflexibility of will, impatience of contradiction, and acknowledging no superiority to its own- this love of ease and sloth- this sectarian exclusiveness which looks with coldness, jealousy, and distrust upon the spiritual prosperity of others? What, we ask, is all this, and a thousand times more, but the one appalling, cancerous sin of selfishness existing in the very heart of depravity, and sending its fatal poison along all the fibers of human society? That there are noble modifications of this appalling description of our nature, we readily and thankfully concede; but they are the exceptions to the rule- the beautiful ivy entwining the decayed and crumbling trunk of our fallen humanity, reminding us of what man was in his first estate, and faintly foreshadowing what man in his restored state will be, when the Lord comes to make all things new.

Nor is this selfishness of our nature entirely uprooted, though greatly mortified, in the renewed man. The Divine precepts, admonitions, and exhortations of God's Word all imply its existence and working in the believer, and the need of incessant battle with the fallen principle. In nothing, perhaps, is its existence more marked than the perpetual collision of our will with the will of God. To please ourselves, and not God, in the path we tread, in the service we perform, in the cross we bear, in the suffering we endure, in the place we dwell- to gratify our inclinations, to please our taste, to indulge our repose, to promote our self-interest, often at the expense of others, is the baneful fruit borne by this corrupt tree. Oh, it is a humiliating truth, that though engrafted, through sovereign grace, as the believer is upon Christ, there should mingle with the "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ," fruit so bitter and noxious. That, with the great, the lofty, the holy principle implanted within of living to please God, we should yet be brought into perpetual conflict with its opposite most low and degrading principle- living to please ourselves. And yet so it is. We marvel not, then, at the earnest and pointed exhortation of the apostle, "We then 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." This precept is in perfect harmony with the genius of the gospel of Jesus. The Divine religion He introduced into the world was in direct and close antagonism to the world's selfishness. It revealed to man a new and unearthly principle- the principle of unselfish love, disinterested sympathy, high-minded, chivalrous benevolence and self-denial. He descended to earth, the reflection of heaven. He appeared to man, the incarnation of God- the embodied essence of the divinest, purest, loftiest affection in the universe. His gospel was unselfish speaking- His life was unselfishness acting- His sympathy was unselfishness weeping- His death was unselfishness suffering, self-consumed amid its own sacrificial fires. "The zeal of your house has eaten me up." And, then, when He had presented on the cross such a spectacle of disinterested love for man as angels could not have conceived, and such an outgush of unselfish sympathy as man had never seen- pure, sublime, unparalleled- He rose from the grave; and, before He relinquished the scene of His humiliation for the home of His glory, He commissioned His apostles to traverse the world and tell its wondrous story as far as the empire of man and misery extended, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Such is the divine precept, and such its human embodiment we are about to study. "Even Christ pleased not himself." May the Holy Spirit of truth, while we behold as in a glass this glory of the Lord, transform us into the same image, that henceforth we may be more like Christ in His unselfish love and disinterested sympathy.

II. The Unselfish Love of Christ.

In what points did our Lord illustrate this Divine principle of His gospel? Trace first its higher forms.

In Christ there was perfect submission to the supreme will of His Father. Our Lord descended to this part of His Father's empire to erect no throne, to assert no will in opposition to God's. His language was, "I came, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." In this He pleased not Himself. He would have done so had there been the slightest dissonance of mind, or collision of will. But the union was essential- the harmony complete- between the will of Christ on earth and the will of God in heaven. It was the will of God that His elect should be redeemed- it was the will of Christ to redeem them. It was the will of God that His glory should be revealed- it was the will of Christ to reveal it. It was the will of God that His truth should be taught- it was the will of Christ to teach it. It was the will of God that Christ should be sacrificed- it was the will of Christ to die. "Lo! I come to do your will, O God," were the prophetic words which struck the first key-note to the harmony of God's will and Christ's will. "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" was a deeper intonation of the melody; "Not my will, O my Father, but Yours be done!" has its loftiest strain on earth. To do God's will from the heart, He was willing to forego the joys of heaven, to empty Himself of His glory, to sink to the deepest humiliation, to die the accursed death- and in all this, "Christ pleased not Himself." Child of God, you reach the loftiest attainment in sanctification, you stand upon the highest round in the ascent of holiness, when your will, like Christ's, is thus blended with your Father's. No holier, no higher, no sublimer act of self-denial marks the believer than this. It was in this school of subjection to the Divine will that Christ's disinterested sympathy for us was trained. Had there been anything of self-seeking in Him, it would have been exhibited in the opposition of His will to the will of His Father. And the moment this hostility commenced, all disinterested benevolence for man would have ceased. The pure, deep spring of His self-consuming sympathy had its rise in the perfect union of His human will with the Divine.

In addition to the sinlessness of the human nature of our Lord, it was also replenished with the Holy Spirit without measure, and He was the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Our Lord Jesus was thus the embodied revelation of infinite benevolence and love. In seeking, therefore, as man, to do the will of God, He clasped the object of His sympathy in a love that sought not its own but the happiness of the being it embraced. It is in this same school we, if molded in Christ's image, are trained to love man, to sympathize with man, to aid man with an unselfish affection. In proportion as we are found doing the will of God, we rise superior to selfishness, and learn the difficult, yet God-like, lesson of looking not exclusively upon our own things, but in expansive, disinterested sympathy also upon the things of others. As we recede from the human and approximate to the Divine, we recede from selfishness and approximate to that disinterested love to man which manifested itself in the bestowment and sacrifice of its unspeakable gift. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him."

In seeking the glory of God supremely, our Lord pleased not Himself. If ever there was the single eye, it beamed in Christ. He had no separate kingdom, swayed no rival scepter, wore no divided crown separate from His Father. All that He embarked in, did, and taught converged to one common center, pointed to one single aim, terminated in one great end- the glory of God! Had there been one thought or feeling of self-seeking in Christ, He might easily have erected a separate throne from His Father's, at whose feet kings, and princes, and potentates would have been proud to bring their treasures and lay their crowns. But no! His whole soul was swallowed up in God. "I seek not my own glory," was a declaration of unselfishness which found a living expression in every action of His life. To win back homage to the dishonored law of God, to vindicate the outraged glory of His Father's government, to reveal His love, and accomplish His purpose in the salvation of His elect, and finally to bring to heaven all whom the Father had chosen to eternal life, to the endless honor and praise of His name, was the pole star which guided Him, the goal for which He pressed. To vindicate and uphold His Father's glory He was willing that His own should set in darkness, in ignominy, and in blood. Oh that this mind that was in Christ might be in us! What a powerful impetus, what a divine sanctity, what a lofty elevation it would give to every purpose, and act, and sacrifice, were it done with a more simple, pure, single aim to the glory of God! It would dignify the lowliest, and sanctify the loftiest service for Christ. Done solely and only for His glory, the cup of cold water which we offered to a disciple would be sweeter than nectar to him who drank it, and to Him in whose name it was given, precious and priceless above rubies! There is no greater, no more humiliating or visible form of selfishness than in placing our glory above God's. If we preach, or labor, or achieve, or suffer, or give with a view of making the world our pedestal, self the sole figure, mankind the admiring gazers, we are seeking but our own honor and glory, and God will consume the idol, and will make us drink the waters which the ashes of our self-deification and man-worship have embittered and defiled. Oh for the mortification of this sin! Oh for the crucifixion of this self-seeking that taints and deforms all that we do for God and for our fellows! In all this, "even Christ pleased not himself."

Such, too, was the tenor of His whole life- it was a life of continuous and perfect self-denial. Every step He trod was another footprint in the path of disinterested benevolence. He went about doing good, scattering from the horn of blessing, His favors and benedictions on friends and foes, on those who blessed, and on those who reviled, those who loved, and those who hated Him. Behold Him denying Himself of earth's comforts to promote the comfort of others; hungry Himself, yet feeding the famishing; weary, yet inviting and leading others to rest; Himself accused, yet vindicating the condemned. Was there ever such a spectacle of self-abnegation?

Trace Christ, too, in service. There was no labor too toilsome or self-denying from which He shrank. He would walk forty miles in one day to take the living water to a poor sinner. He would stoop to unclasp the sandal and wash the feet of His erring disciple. He would stand still at the word of a blind beggar sitting by the wayside, and in response to his appeal, pour the light of day upon the sightless eye. He would go, when asked, to heal a sick servant. He would come, when bidden, to the house of mourning. He had an ear for every cry of sorrow, an eye for every spectacle of woe, a hand for every object of need, a heart for every appeal to human sympathy. Yes, there was no service so wearisome, or so distasteful, or so difficult, or so self-denying, in which He was not at home. The atmosphere most genial with His nature was laden with suffering, saturated with tears, vocal with sighs, and groans, and supplications. The homes most attractive to Him were those where poverty, sickness, and grief had found an entrance. Such was the pure, self-denying benevolence of Jesus! Well may it be said, "even Christ pleased not himself."

But the crowning act of His disinterested love and sympathy was, His suffering unto death. Marvellous and precious as were all the other expressions of His unselfish love, they pale and vanish before this the most marvelous, precious, and costly of all- the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross! What more could unselfish love do? What loftier form could it assume? What costlier sacrifice could it make? More than itself it could not give. Listen to the inspired confirmation of this: "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Romans 5:6-8. What more, we again ask, could love so unselfish, so disinterested do? Listen yet again "Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us." "Who gave himself for our sins." "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." "Who gave himself for us, that He might deliver us from all iniquity." Oh what an infinitude of wealth and glory and blessing is included in these words- "gave himself!" Gave His Deity- gave His humanity- gave His obedience- gave His life- gave His heart's blood- gave His heaven of glory- all for poor, unworthy, self-destroyed, helpless sinners who had nothing to pay- pardoning them fully, justifying them freely, calling them graciously- keeping and eternally glorifying them! O Lord, my soul dissolves before this stupendous, this strange, this unparalleled spectacle of disinterested, self-sacrificing love! I blush to find myself so unlike it- I weep that my sins demanded it- I believe because it was You who died- my heart is won, my affections are captivated by a love which enchains to itself my whole being!

"Love celestial, ardent fire!

Oh extreme of sweet desire!
Spread your bright, your gentle flame,
Swift over all my mental frame.
Sweet affections flow from thence,
Sweet above the joys of sense!
Let me thus forever be
Full of gladness, full of You."

III. The Practical Lessons.

Before we speak of the consolation flowing to the saints of God from this view of Christ's disinterested sympathy, let us glean a few of THE PRACTICAL LESSONS IT INCULCATES.

The first holy lesson it teaches is- humility of mind. Pride forms the root of all living to ourselves. And before our selfishness can be expelled, replaced by a new and divine principle, the power of Christ's cross must be brought into the soul, ruling and conquering the principle of pride. "Though, I be nothing," will then be the echo of our hearts to the noble declaration of Paul. The moment this inflated bubble is pierced by the cross of Jesus, the collapse follows, and the disciplined, humbled believer is prostrate in the dust before God, in the spirit of self-abasement and self-surrender. Oh, let us cultivate a grace which assimilates us more than all others to Him who, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Never are we more truly conformed to Christ than when, emptied of self, we walk humbly with God. Oh, let us earnestly seek more fully to possess, with all our attainments, this, the highest and holiest of all- "the mind that was in Christ Jesus." It will brim with it a happiness and a soothing, real and indescribable. It will preserve us from those woundings, chafings, and self-pity to which the unslain pride of our hearts incessantly exposes us. Why do we feel so sensitively and so keenly the slight, the neglect, the depreciation of our fellows? Why, when thrust into the shadow, while others are more favored and honored and admired, do we, like Haman, "retire to our house mourning, and having our head covered?" Is it not because of the deification and worship of self within us? Oh to be emptied of self-complacency, self-seeking, self-exaltation! This multi-headed monster, which can only be effectually conquered and slain by a believing realization of the self-denying love of Christ! Study this perfect annihilation of self in Jesus more closely, and you will imperceptibly, yet really, transcribe the divine and beautiful lineament to your own soul. The power of Christ will be upon you visibly, the loveliness of Jesus will array you beautifully, you will feed in the greenest pasture, and gather the fairest flowers, and pluck the richest fruit, and drink the purest stream of spiritual blessing, because your daily walk will be in lowliness and love beneath the Saviors cross- self swallowed up in Christ, and Christ all and in all.

"Oh, hide this SELF from me, that I
No more, but Christ in me, may live;
My vile affections crucify,
Nor let one darling lust survive!
In all things nothing may I see,
Nothing desire or seek, but Thee!
'O love, your sovereign aid impart,
To save me from low-thoughted care!
Chase this self-will through all my heart,
Through all its latent mazes there
Make me your duteous child, that I,
Ceaseless, may 'Abba, Father!' cry.
'Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits your call;
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
'I am your Love, your God, your All!'
To feel Your power, to hear Your voice,
To taste Your love, be all my choice."

But the deepest renunciation of self is in the believing reception, as a sinner, of the Lord Jesus Christ. All other acts of humiliation and self denial apart from this are imperfect. Until the contrite and believing heart has received Christ, until the soul has subjected itself to the power of His gospel, until the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed the mind from the enslaving law of 'self-justification', self may be mortified, but not humbled; wounded, but not slain. The very reception of God's free justification implies the surrender of that strong citadel of the soul of man- the principle of self-righteousness. And on no other ground will God capitulate with man in the great work of salvation. All human merit must be disclaimed, all creature worthiness must be abjured, and the one plea with which we may approach the Savior is that of a sinner bankrupt and beggared of all personal righteousness, worthiness, and claim, looking only to Jesus, and resting simply and solely in His blood and righteousness for pardon and acceptance. Oh, what a real prostration and crucifixion of self is there in this one believing act of receiving Christ! The great mountain has been shaken to its center before the power of the true Zerubbabel. Jesus has conquered. His grace has gotten the victory. His love is clothed with triumph, and another jewel is planted in His studded diadem. My reader, has there been such a revelation of the Lord Jesus to your soul as to stain the pride of your own glory? Has this Dagon self fallen before the divine Ark of your salvation?

But let me remind the child of God that the principle of self in the renewed heart, though fatally wounded and destined eventually to die, yet retains much of its original vitality, and will, by occasional spasmodic acts, often seem to regain its original power and ascendancy. This must be met by a constant and close dealing with Christ. The principle of self-pleasing can only be kept in abeyance by strengthening its opposite principle- walking humbly with God, under the influence of the love of Christ, constraining us to live, not as seeking our own ease, advantage or honor, but with the single eye to God's glory both in service and in suffering, in all we do and endure. Oh hateful and hated act that terminates only in- self! If, to gratify the lust for human distinction and applause, if, to please self in any one of its many forms: self-esteem, self-complacency, self-exaltation; this thing has been done, better, far better, that it had been left undone, than that it should stand but as a monument to the pride and self-pleasing of our depraved hearts! And, oh, let us lay our mouth in the dust in the remembrance of our many failures concerning this divine and holy precept. How much have we done for self, ostensibly done for Christ! How have we spoken and labored and given in connection

with holy things, seeking our own glory and not the glory of God! But for the blood of atonement, where could we look? The most righteous, most pure, most lowly act would witness against us at the tribunal of Christ, as having enough of the sin of self-pleasing to assign both it and us to God's eternal displeasure! What need have we to confess the sin, and wash in atoning blood, the moment we are conscious our self-complacency has been moved by the flattery and applause of our sinful fellows!

O God! we blush to lift up our faces to You in the remembrance of our sin of self-pleasing! Lamb of God! wash out the deep, dark stain, and fill our soul with contrition, humiliation, and self-abhorrence, that we should ever have sought to carve our vile name upon Your dear cross, while professedly uplifting only You!

The practical embodiment by us of this holy principle, thus so beautifully exhibited in our Lord, will regulate our conduct towards others. A disinterested sympathy, like His, will prompt us to seek the advancement of another's interest and well-being as well as our own. It is one of the characteristics of true love, that she "seeks not her own." Like the Being from where it flows, true love is disinterested and self-sacrificing. It looks with an eye of interest upon the condition of others. It will, so far as it righteously can, descend to their circumstances and infirmities, if it might but promote their well-being. A striking example of this is presented in the conduct of Paul. The quotation is long, but one passage supplies a clue to the whole. "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 1 Cor. 9:19-23. Magnanimous man! your love was like your Master's, high-minded, chivalrous, and self-sacrificing. What abnegation of self in your ministry! what a forgetfulness of self in your labors! what a sacrifice of self in your suffering! Lord, may I follow Your apostle as he followed You!

This Divine precept, so touchingly illustrated by Christ, also includes bearing the burdens, tenderness toward the infirmities, and sympathy with the sorrows and necessities of our brethren. In all this Christ has set us an example that we should follow His steps. To be Christ-like, in this particular, is to aspire to one of the loftiest and loveliest features of our religion. To supply, as far as in our power, the needs of Christ's poor- our brethren by a fraternal tie, closer and holier than nature's; to visit the sick and afflicted, the widow and the fatherless; to bear with the infirmities of those who, in religious things, are weak in judgment, in faith, and in practice; to identify ourselves with those who are suffering calumny, persecution, and loss for Jesus' sake- oh, this it is to be like Him who went about doing good in the spirit of His own unworlly, unselfish religion! How touching is the apostle's exhortation- "you then 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; but, as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." May the Lord the Spirit write this holy, unearthly precept upon our heart! May we more deeply feel, more constantly realize, that, ransomed with so great a price as Christ's blood, we are not our own; and that, in the self-denying spirit of the gospel, living for the good of others, especially for the household of faith, we are, in reality, living for the Lord himself. The lowliest labor of love, the feeblest work of faith, the obscurest act of self-denying service, done in the Lord's name, is registered in His remembrance, to be reproduced, acknowledged, and rewarded in the great day of account. Treading thus in the footsteps of Jesus, we shall experience a happiness and a blessing found only in a life of unselfish benevolence, of disinterested, expansive sympathy. And while others are living in the frigid region of self-pleasing, your spirit will rise to an atmosphere of the purest happiness and joy, unchilled and undimmed by the iciness and fogs of this sinful, heartless, selfish world. Assimilating with the spirit, you will also participate in the joy of Him who pleased not Himself, but lived and labored, suffered and died for others. Oh, evidence and illustrate your union with the Lord by the studious and daily cultivation of this disinterested, self-denying sympathy! And, in addition to the evidence thus appended to your discipleship with Christ, it will return into your own soul with a sweet recompense of reward. Disinterested charity is sweetly and richly remunerative- blessing him who receives, and with a powerful reflex influence, it blesses him who bestows. Would you experience the purest, the most exquisite and refined bliss the human heart is capable? Then, imitate Christ, and be merciful, sympathizing, and kind; loving others as you love yourself, seeking and promoting their well-being and happiness, even though it curtail or sacrifice your own. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." 1 John 3:16-18. Do this, and your own need will be met, your own sorrow soothing, your own wound healed, by the love and sympathy you have dispersed abroad, returning back in confluent streams upon yourself.

"Are you dejected? Is your mind overcast?

Go, fix some weighty truth;
Chain down some passion;
do some generous good;

Teach ignorance to see, or grief to smile."

Then shall the benedictions of the widow, the fatherless, and the poor light upon you in gentle breathings; above all, and sweeter than all the hand of Him who submitted to a life of poverty and humiliation to enrich you with grace and glory, will pour the oil of gladness on your head.

"Blest is the man whose softening heart

Feels all another's pain,

To whom the supplicating eye

Is never raised in vain.

"Whose breast expands with generous warmth

A brother's woes to feel;

And bleeds in pity over the wounds

It lacks the power to heal.

"He spreads his kind supporting arms

To every child of grief;

His secret bounty largely flows,

And brings unasked relief.

"To gentle offices of love

His feet are never slow;

He views, through mercy's melting eye,

A brother in a foe.

"Peace from the bosom of his God,

My peace to him I give;

And when He kneels before the throne,

His trembling soul shall live."

"To him protection shall be shown,

And mercy from above

Descend on those who thus fulfil

The perfect law of love."

We have equal reason to guard against "religious selfishness". This is but another form of the fallen principle we have been endeavoring to combat- it is selfishness in a Christian disguise. A child of God may be so exclusively enfolded within his own religious privileges and enjoyments as to overlook his obligation and pledge to promote the spiritual well-being of others. Satisfied of his own conversion- nourished in rich pastures- and experiencing high spiritual enjoyment, He may become selfishly and criminally indifferent to the multitudes within his reach living in sin and ignorance, destitution and neglect; hearing of no Savior, possessing no Bible, attending no sanctuary; and each day passing into a hopeless eternity, uttering the fearful wail and the bitter reproof- "no man cared for my soul!" But this must not be. The religion and the love of Him who sacrificed Himself for us, forbids it! What an example of self-denying, self-sacrificing, self-consuming, disinterested benevolence, sympathy, and labor was Christ's- He had griefs that needed assuaging, loneliness that needed cheering, depressions that needed soothing, wounds that needed healing, needs that needed supplying, weakness that needed strengthening, and yet, He buried all within the deep, silent cloisters of His own bosom, and went about doing good! Let us imitate Him! God converted us, that we might be instrumental in converting others! Through grace we have found Jesus, that we may bring our fellow-sinners to Jesus. The light of life has been enkindled within our soul, that its bright shining might guide the steps of those who are stumbling on the dark mountains of death, to the Savior. The Lord, therefore, deposited this rich grace in our heart, that it might be dispersed abroad in self-denying efforts to win souls to Christ. Arise, then, and let us labor. This is a day of glad tidings, and we dare not hold our peace. We must not be satisfied with our own salvation, but seek also the salvation of others. We must love our neighbor as ourselves. And what is the nature of the love we are to cherish for him? A self-denying sympathy for his soul's eternal happiness! And who is our neighbor? Not simply him who dwells beneath the shadow of our own abode- but the sinner, the wanderer, the sufferer, the child of sorrow and of need, be he who and where he may. He is your neighbor! Be willing for a while to forego your own religious advantage, to relinquish some personal spiritual enjoyment, to find him out and tell him of Christ. How can you go to and fro to the rich banquet of the gospel, week after week, and feel no concern for, and make no effort in behalf of, those within your reach who are dying of spiritual starvation amid the plenty of which you have enough and to spare? This is religious selfishness of a fearfully responsible kind! The Lord deliver us from blood-guiltiness! You must deny yourself of some spiritual privileges for the spiritual benefit of others, if you are a true disciple and imitator of the Savior. Restrict not your evangelical sympathy and labor within the limits of your own vicinity. At home or abroad, in your native or in a foreign land, be a herald of salvation, a missionary of the gospel; a witness for Christ, recognizing him as your neighbor and your brother who needs a word of instruction, a look of kindness, an uplifting hand- the oil and the wine of Christian sympathy and love poured into a wounded and bleeding heart- in a word, someone to speak to of- Jesus!

"Your neighbor? It is he whom you

have power to aid and bless;

Whose aching heart or burning brow,

Your soothing hand may press.

"Your neighbor? It is the fainting poor

whose eye with need is dim,

Whom hunger sends from door to door-

Go and succor him.

"Your neighbor? It is that weary man

Whose years are at their brim,

Bent low with sickness, cares, and pain-

Go and comfort him.

"Your neighbor? It is the heart bereft

Of every earthy gem;

Widow and orphan helpless left-

Go and shelter them.

"Your neighbor? Do you meet a human form

Less favored than your own?

Remember, it is your neighbor worm,

Your brother, or your son.

"Oh, pass not, pass not heedless by;

Perhaps you can redeem

The breaking heart from misery,

Go, share your lot with him.

Let us, also, be watchful against "denominational selfishness". Other branches of the Christian church than our own should share our sympathy, good-will, and prayers. We add nothing really to the ranks of Christ by proselyting from one denomination to another. Alas! there are those who deem it of much more importance to compass sea and land to draw over a convert to their own religious sect from another, than to make a single effort to win a convert to Christ from the world! What has Christ, or what has the gospel really gained by this? Nothing! To labor only to advance our own denomination, to seek exclusively the increase, the wealth, the prosperity of the body to which we belong, indifferent to the depression, or jealous of the increase and prosperity of other communions, is not the spirit of the gospel, is not the spirit of Christ. Oh for more largeness of heart! Oh for more of our Lord's disinterested sympathy! Let our love and intercessions embrace all Christian sections and congregations of the one Church of Christ, praying, "Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces! For my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good."

Nor would we fail to remind you that in proportion as self-pleasing in us decreases, pleasing God increases. In the same degree that the one is crucified, the other lives. "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." And what is Christ living in the believer, but the believer living so as to please God? And, oh, to live as pleasing God is the holiest principle, the purest joy, the most sublime life. An angel, with soaring wing, could not ascend higher!

But for one moment let us refer to the CONSOLATIONS flowing from this subject. If such is the disinterested sympathy of Christ, then, believe that you have not a need, nor a grief, nor a burden that He is not prepared to make all His own. Oh, how much have we yet to learn of the unselfishness of Christ's compassion- its self-denying, yearning, weeping tenderness! He would have you learn something of it in your present circumstances. For this end He has permitted them. Oblivious of all your past waywardness, ingratitude, and sins, forgetting your countless backslidings and base requitals of His love; and remembering only the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, how you once went after Him in the wilderness, and entered into a covenant to be His, which covenant you have broken times without number- in the exercise

of a love forgetful of Himself, and thinking only of you, He will cast around you the robe of a sympathy which soothes your sorrow, while it veils your sin, and which absorbs your infirmity, while it makes you lovely through His loveliness put upon you. Let no sad memories, then, intercept your approach to the Savior. So unselfish is His love, so disinterested His sympathy, not one look, or word, or motion of the hand will upbraid you for the past, or reprove you for the present. He will forget how you have wounded, grieved, and dishonored Him; how your heart has again and again proved treacherous and inconstant as a broken bow; how, forsaking your first love, you have gone after other lovers and other confidences; and now retrace your steps and return to Him again, because the hand of affliction, of sorrow, and of chastisement is upon you- forgetting all this, He will receive you graciously, love you freely, and turn His anger away from you, clasping you to the bosom of a disinterested sympathy that writes your countless failures upon the sand, while it engraves your lowliest deeds of love eternal upon the rock.

"But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love." Acts 20:24