

~Other Speakers A-F: Samuel Davies:

The Love of Souls, a Necessary Qualification for the Ministerial Office

by Samuel Davies, preached in Cumberland County, Virginia, July 13, 1758, at the ordination of the Henry Patillo and William Richardson.

"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only—but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us." 1 Thessalonians 2:8

A complete ministerial character is a constellation of all those graces and virtues which can adorn human nature; and the lack of any one of them leaves a hideous defect in it, that breaks its symmetry and uniformity, and renders it less amiable and less useful. The love of God, and the love of man, and all the various modifications of this sacred passion—ardent devotion and active zeal, charity, compassion, meekness, patience, and humility—the graces of the Christian, are necessary to finish this character, and make us able ministers of the New Testament.

Each of these virtues deserves to be illustrated and recommended; but should I attempt to crowd them into one discourse, I would be bewildered and lost in the vast variety of materials. I must, therefore, single out some one particular, some one bright star in this heavenly constellation, to which I would confine your attention on this solemn occasion, and with the sacred splendor of which I would adorn both myself and you. Let the subject be Christian Benevolence, or the love of souls. Love is a delightful theme; and those who feel it, take pleasure in thinking and talking about it. Therefore, while this is the subject, we cannot be weary nor inattentive.

The history of mankind cannot furnish us with a more striking instance of benevolence, or the love of souls, than we find in the apostle Paul, who speaks as like a father and an orator in this chapter—a chapter written in such pathetic strains, that I can remember the time, when the reading of it has drawn tears even from heart so hard as mine. "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only—but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us."

The connection seems to be this, "As a mother caring for her little children," that is, as a tender mother, who undertakes to nurse her own children, with fond endearment gives them the breast, and feeds them with her milk, the quintessence of her own blood; "so," says Paul, "being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you" the sincere milk of the Word, even "the gospel of God," the most precious thing we had to communicate: and not only this—but "our own souls, (or lives also,) because you were dear unto us."

When he says, "We were willing to have imparted to you our own souls or lives;" he may either mean, that such was his affection for the Thessalonians, and such was the influence his affection had upon his address to them, that he, as it were, breathed out his soul in every word. So affectionate, so pathetic, and earnest was his discourse, that it seemed animated with his very soul. Every word came from his heart, and seemed a vehicle to convey his spirit into them. He spoke as if he would have died on the spot, through earnestness to affect them with what he said, that their souls, so dear to him, might be saved.

Or, he may mean, that so ardent was his love for them, that he was willing not only to preach to them—but to lay down his life for them: he would willingly endure a natural death, if by that means he might bring them to obtain eternal life.

Some of the patriots of antiquity, we are told, loved their country so well, that they generously sacrificed their lives for it. This public spirit, indeed, is almost lost in these dregs of time; but the evidence of ancient history is sufficient to convince us, that such a thing once was.

And shall not the love of souls be as heroic, and work as powerfully? Yes, we find this spirit of sacred patriotism glowing with the utmost ardor in the generous hearts of Paul and his friends. Paul breathes out his spirit towards the Philippians: "If," says he, "I am offered up (as a drink offering,) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." John also infers this as a matter of obligation, from the consideration of Christ's laying down a life of infinitely greater worth for us. "Hereby," says he, "we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the friends." 1 John 3:16.

Such, my friends, ought to be the spirit of every gospel minister: thus dearly should they love the souls of men; and thus ardently desirous should they be to conduct them to Jesus and salvation.

My present design is to show what a happy effect the generous principles of benevolence, or the love of souls, would have upon us in the exercise of the ministerial office. And this will appear in the following particulars:

First, The prevalence of this disposition will contribute to ingratiate us with mankind, and so promote our usefulness.

It is not to be expected in the stated course of our ministry, that those should receive advantage by our labors—to whom we are unacceptable. If they are averse to us, they will also disregard what we say; and while they disregard it, they can receive no benefit from it. The ministry of a contemptible minister will always be contemptible, and consequently useless.

But, on the other hand, when a minister in his congregation appears in a circle of friends, whose affections meet in him as their common center, then his labors are likely to be at once pleasing and profitable to them. When the heart is open to the speaker, his words will gain admission through the same door of entrance. Then there will be no suspicions of imposition, or sinister selfish design. Then even hard things will be received, not as the effect of moroseness—but as wholesome severities from faithful friendship.

For the confirmation of this, I may appeal to your observations of mankind: you know they will bear many things, and even take them well, from a known friend, which they would warmly resent from others. You know the persuasion, the remonstrance, or admonition of a friend will have great weight, when that of others would be neglected or despised. In short, you may almost carry any point with mankind—if they are satisfied that you love them, and regard their interest; and they also love you: but even real kindnesses from those whom they disaffect, will be received with suspicious caution, and perhaps with indignation.

Now, such is the nature of the ministerial office, that there is much need of this happy preconception of mankind in our favor, that we may discharge it with comfort and success. We are not only to display the rich grace of the gospel, and the fair prospects of a blessed immortality—but also to denounce the terrors of the Lord, and rouse up again the lightning, and thunder, and tempest of Sinai. We must represent human nature, in its present fallen state, in a very disagreeable and mortifying light; we must overturn the flattering hopes of mankind, and embitter to them the false measures of sin, in which they place so much of their happiness. We must put the cross of Christ on their shoulder, and reconcile them to self-denial, reproach, and various forms of suffering, for the sake of righteousness. We must inculcate upon them a religion for sinners; in which self-accusation, remorse, fear, sorrow, and all the painful heart-breakings of repentance are necessary ingredients. We must set ourselves in a strenuous opposition to the favorite lusts of the world, and the ways of the multitude; and this alone will set the world against us as their enemies, and officious disturbers of their peace.

We must also exercise the rod of discipline for the correction of offenders; must take upon us the ungrateful office of reprovers, and give the reproof with proper degrees of severity.

In short, the faithful discharge of our office will oblige us to use such measures as have been found, by the experience of thousands of years, to be very unpopular and irritating to mankind—measures, which brought upon the prophets, the apostles, and other servants of Christ, the odium of the world, and cost many of them their lives! And if we tread in their steps—then we may expect the same treatment in a greater or less degree.

And how shall this unacceptable office be discharged faithfully—and yet as inoffensively and acceptably as can be? I can prescribe no certain expedient for this purpose, while the world continues as bad as it is. This is what neither the prophets nor apostles, though inspired from heaven, were ever able to find out. But that which will have the happiest tendency of anything within the reach of humanity is the prevalence of benevolence, or the love of souls.

It is comparatively easy to a minister, who ardently loves his people to make them sensible that he does love them, and is their real friend, even when he is constrained to put on the appearance of severity. Love has a language of its own—a language which mankind can hardly fail to understand; and which flattery and affectation can but seldom mimic with success. Love, like the other passions, has its own look, its own voice, its own air and manner in everything, strongly expressive of itself.

Look at a friend when the sensations of love are tender and vigorous; and you see the generous passion looking upon you through his eyes, speaking to you by his voice, and expressing itself in every gesture. The most studied and well-managed artifices of flattery and dissimulation have something in them so stiff, so affected, so forced, so unnatural—that the cheat may often be detected, or, at least, suspected. When dissimulation mourns, and puts on the airs of sorrow and compassion—it is but whining and grimace: and when she smiles—it is but fawning and affectation; so hard is it to put on the face of genuine love without being possessed of it; and so easy is it for a real friend to appear such.

Hence it appears that the most effectual method to convince our hearers that we love them, is, to be under the strong influence of that benevolent passion which we profess. The sacred fire of love will blaze out in full evidence, and afford the strongest conviction they can receive—that their minister is their friend and aims at their best interest, even when he denounces the terrors of the Lord against them, or assumes the unacceptable character of their reprover; and when they are thus happily prejudiced in his favor, they will take almost anything well at his hands. Then, if ever, they will receive the truth in love, when they believe it is spoken in love.

That must be a base, wicked sinner indeed, that can look up to the pulpit, and there see an affectionate friend in the person of his minister, adorned with smiles of love, or melting into tears of tender pity—and yet resent his faithful freedoms, and hate him as his enemy for telling him the truth.

Some ministers are not loved in a suitable degree by their people. But, not to mention at present the criminal cause of this neglect on the side of the people, I am afraid one common cause is—that they do not sufficiently love them. Love is naturally productive of love; it scatters its heavenly sparks around, and these kindle the gentle flame where they fall. Oh! that each of us, who sustain the sacred character, may purchase the love of our people with the price of our own love! And may we distribute this to them with so liberal a hand, as always to leave them debtors to us in this precious article. That people should love their minister more than he loves their souls—is a shocking, unnatural disproportion.

Farther; the prevalence of this sacred passion naturally tends to give our ministrations, and the whole of our behavior, such an air as will ingratiate us with mankind. Let a minister of Christ ascend the sacred desk, with a heart glowing with the love of souls, and what an amiable, engaging figure does he make, even in the most gloomy and terrible message. Then, if he denounces the vengeance of God against impenitent sinners, he passes sentence with tears in his eyes, and the aspect of tender compassion and friendly reluctance. And if he is obliged to put on the stern air of a reprover, he still retains the winning character of the friend of human nature, and the lover of souls.

Love gives a smooth, though sharp edge to his address, like a razor set in oil. Love animates his persuasions and exhortations, and gives them additional force. Love breathes through his invitations, and renders them irresistible. Love brightens the evidence of conviction, and sweetly forces it upon unwilling minds: for who would not lay his heart open to a friend? Love mingles smiles with his frowns, and convinces his hearers, that he denounces the morose terrors of the law with all the affectionate benevolence of the gospel; and represents their danger and misery in a tremendous light—merely because he loves them, and is zealous to save them from it.

Love would direct him to express the friend in conversation, better than all the rules of good-breeding that can be prescribed, and all the affected familiarity and complaisance that the greatest artificer of flattery and dissimulation could use. Love would give a graceful ease, an engaging softness, and a generous open-hearted frankness, to his behavior. Then, like Paul, he would comfort, and exhort, and charge his dear people, as a father does his children, (1 Thess. 2:11:) and would carry all the attractive charms of love with him, wherever he went. This would be an inward principle of conduct; and, therefore, the conduct to which it incites, would be natural, easy, and unsuspecting, and free from stiffness and affectation, which never fails to disgust whenever it is perceived.

"O God of Love! implant and nourish this noble principle of love in our breasts; and may it actuate us in all our ministrations and adorn and recommend them!"

Secondly, The love of souls will enable and excite us to exercise the ministry in such a manner as tends to affect our hearers, and make deep impressions upon their hearts. Love will move all the springs of sacred oratory, and give a force and spirit to our address, which even a hard heart cannot but feel. When we speak to those we love, we shall speak in earnest; and that is the most likely way to speak to the heart. Love will render

us sincere, and adorn all our ministrations with the plain, artless garb of sincerity; and the sincerity of the speaker will have no small influence upon the hearers.

When love warns of danger, the hearers are alarmed, and apprehend that there is danger indeed. When love dissuades, it is the gentle restraint of a friendly hand; and therefore agreeable, or at least tolerable. When love persuades and exhorts, what heart can be obstinate, when it is known it does but persuade to happiness? When men see the sincere lover of souls in the pulpit, it is natural for them to say, "Now it is proper I should be attentive, and regard what I hear; for I am convinced the speaker aims at my best interest. His advice I may safely follow, as the voice of benevolence; and even his admonitions and reproofs I should take in good part, as the effects of faithful friendship, that would rather run the risk of my displeasure by plain and honest dealing—than be accessory to my ruin by flattery and excessive complaisance."

Thus it is natural for them to reflect; and by these reflections the way is opened into their hearts. Oh! that you and I, my ministerial friends, may make thorough trial for the future of the efficacy of this affectionate preaching! May the arrows we shoot at the hearts of our hearers—be pointed with love! Then are they most likely to make a deep medicinal wound.

The force of love is at once gentle and powerful. It will tenderly affect—when a stern, austere, imperious address never fails to disgust and exasperate; and a languid and indifferent address, the language of a cold unfeeling heart, leaves the hearers as cold and languid as itself.

Thirdly, The ardent love of souls will make a minister of the gospel diligent and laborious in his office.

How laborious and indefatigable are we in pursuing a point we have so much at heart, and in serving those we love? Therefore, if the love of souls is our ruling passion, and their salvation is the object we have in view—then with what indefatigable zeal and diligence shall we labor to serve their immortal interests! How gladly shall we spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly we love, the less we should be loved. 2 Corinthians 12:15.

How will this endear our office to us, as an office of benevolence, and a labor of love! How shall we love and bless the name of our divine Master, who has made it our duty to spend our life in the agreeable work of serving our friends. While this benevolent spirit glows in our hearts, we can leave no blanks in the page of life—but all must be filled up, with the offices of friendship. Love, an ever operating love, will always keep us busy; and that amiable and comprehensive summary of our Master's history, will, in some measure, agree to us, "He went about doing good." Acts 10:38.

Love will excite us to preach the Word, to be instant in season, out of season. 2 Timothy 4:2. Love will give our conversation a right turn; and with a natural unaffected air, drop a word upon every occasion that may edify the circle of friends—a circle so wide, that we can never pass over it while in company with any of the human race. As souls are equal in worth, notwithstanding the various ranks and distinctions among mankind, so the love of souls is an impartial passion: like the redeeming love of Christ, it extends to "all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, and languages;" and it will excite us to the most condescending services to the poorest and lowest, as well as the great and honorable.

Love will often cast us on the knee, as affectionate intercessors for our dear friends, that is, for all mankind, and particularly for that part of them which is more immediately entrusted to our ministerial care. Love will inspire our prayers with a kind of almighty importunity, and render us unable to bear a refusal in a point that we have so much at heart.

Oh! what wonders would love enable us to perform! How many precious hours, now trifled away—would it redeem! What spirit, what life, would it diffuse through our secret devotions and public ministrations! It would adorn our life not only with a shining action here and there, like a single star in the expanse of heaven—but crowd it thick with pious offices of friendship, and generous exploits of benevolence, like the glow of blended splendor from ten thousand stars in the Milky Way. It would render idleness an intolerable burden, and labor a pleasure; which leads me to observe more particularly, in the

Fourth place, The ardent love of souls will not only make us diligent and laborious in our ministry—but enable us to bear all the hardships and difficulties we may meet with in the discharge of it, with patience, and even with cheerfulness.

Love is strong to suffer difficulties—and mighty to conquer difficulties. The love of fame, the love of riches, the love of honor and pre-eminence, what difficulties has it encountered—what obstructions has it surmounted—what dangers has it dared! How tolerable, yes, how pleasant, has it rendered fatigues and hardships! And how has it rendered dangers and death charming and illustrious! And shall not the nobler passion—the love of souls, do vastly more? It has already done more. This was the heroic passion that animated Paul, and taught him to look upon dangers and death, in their most shocking forms, with a loving contempt. Though he knew that bonds and imprisonments awaited him, yet, "none of these things move me," says he, "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." Acts 20:24.

I point out this Christian hero as a specimen; but it would be easy to add many other illustrious names to the list. And would not the sacred fervor of love reconcile even such feeble and cowardly creatures as we—to hardships and dangers, in the service of souls? If we may but save them from everlasting ruin—then how insignificant are the greatest difficulties we can suffer in the generous attempt! If we can but make those happy whom we love—then welcome labor, fatigue, difficulties and dangers; and farewell that ease and indolence, that pleasure or pursuit, that is inconsistent with this main design. Labor becomes delight, difficulty becomes inviting, and danger becomes illustrious and alluring—in this benevolent enterprise. Who would not labor with pleasure, and suffer with patience, and even with joy, for the service of souls—souls formed for immortality! souls whom we love even as ourselves! We begrudge a little pains or suffering for those whom we disregard; but love sweetens labor, and lightens every burden!

This I would direct to you, my friends, who are now to take part with us in this ministry. I doubt not but you are better acquainted with the work you are about to undertake than to need my information, that you are not entering into an office of ease and self-indulgence—but of labor, toil, and difficulty—an office that cannot be faithfully discharged without frequent self-denial, incessant application, and exhausting fatigues. But for your encouragement, remember that all this labor, difficulty, and self-denial—you are to endure in the service of those you love. And love, you will find, will lighten the burden, and render a life of toil and fatigue more easy and delightful, than indolence and inactivity. Therefore, nourish this generous benevolence, as that which will render you vigorous in doing, and strong in suffering. O that your Divine Master may fire your hearts with much of this truly ministerial spirit!

Fifthly, I observe the prevalence of a spirit of benevolence would happily restrain us from everything "low, disgraceful, or offensive," in our ministrations, in our conversation and designs.

Let the love of mankind be warm and vigorous in our hearts—and we cannot address them, even upon terrible subjects, in a stern, unrelenting manner—a manner that looks more like a scold, than a Christian orator; and which tends rather to exasperate, than reform. But we shall denounce the most terrible things, in a soft language, and with as mild and gentle an aspect as faithfulness will allow, or compassion inspire.

Let love be the spring of your conduct—and it will render it courteous without affectation, insinuating without artifice, engaging without flattery, and honest without a huffish bluntness. This will guard us against all airs of insolence and affected superiority in conversation; and a distant, imperious behavior, that seems to forbid access, and never fails to excite disgust.

When a man appears of vast importance to himself—he will, for that very reason, appear very insignificant and contemptible to others. But if we tenderly love those with whom we converse, it will render our conversation affable, sociable, and humble, and modest. And this will be found the best expedient to engage the esteem of mankind, and procure that respect which pride with all its artifices seeks in vain. For that maxim, repeated more than once by our blessed Lord, who knew mankind so well, will hold good in this case, "He who exalts himself—shall be abased; and he who humbles himself—shall be exalted." Luke 14:11; 18:14.

The ardent love of souls will render us meek and patient under unkind treatment, and keep down those sallies of anger, which are at once so unmanly and unministerial. This will sweeten our disposition, and purge out those sour humours which render men peevish, sullen, and ready to blaze out into anger at every provocation. This lamb-like spirit will conform us to the Lamb of God, "who, when they hurled their insults at him—he did not retaliate; when he suffered—he made no threats," 1 Peter 2:23, nor burst out into a flame of passion.

If love is predominant in the heart, it will happily disable us from aiming at sordid ends, and from taking sordid measures to obtain those ends. Then we shall not labor for the applause of mankind—but for their salvation.

We shall not seek their silver and gold—but their souls! And we shall be able to say with Paul, "I am not seeking what is yours, but you!" 2 Corinthians 12:14. Though we may not only be willing to receive—but justly insist upon, a competent support, from those in whose service we spend our lives; yet if the love of their souls, and not of their money, is uppermost in our hearts—it will inspire us with such moderation, contentment, and noble negligence, as to earthly things, and with such apparent zeal and earnestness for their salvation, that if they have the least degree of candor—they cannot but be convinced that it is the latter, and not the former, which we have most at heart, and chiefly labor to promote.

This principle will restrain us from all the artifices of avarice, and from ever wearing a "cloak of covetousness." 1 Thess. 2:5. It would enable us so to behave, as may afford mankind sufficient matter of conviction, that we need not be hired to do them good offices, and endeavor to save their souls; but that we do it freely, were it possible for us to make the attempt successfully, without devoting all that time and strength to it, which others lay out in providing for themselves and their families.

Thus I have shown you, in a few instances, by way of specimen, what a happy influence the love of souls would have upon the ministerial character, and consequently upon those among whom we exercise our office.

But now, my friends of the LAITY, I must turn my address to you: and the first improvement I would have you make of what you have heard, is, to learn from it in what light you should look upon your ministers. Look upon us as "the friends, the lovers of your souls." If you can discover that we are not worthy of that character in some suitable degree, then it is your right as men, as Christians—to reject us, and not own us as your ministers! But, while you cannot but acknowledge us in that sacred character, you are bound to esteem us as your friends—the real friends of your best interests.

And while you look upon us in this light, will you not practically treat us as such? Will you not regard the instructions, the exhortations and warnings, which you hear from your friends, who feel themselves deeply interested in your happiness? "Now we really live—if you stand fast in the Lord." (1 Thess. 3:8,) But, O! How it pains us—to see you destroy yourselves! Will you not bear with our severity, since it is the warmest benevolence to you, that constrains us to use it?

When we would engage you to a life of holiness, why do you fly off, as if you were afraid of being caught in some snare? We are your friends who persuade you; and why will you apprehend any injury from us? When we would dissuade you from the pursuit of guilty pleasures, why are you so stiff, and tenacious of them? Do you think we love you so little, that we could begrudge you any real happiness, or would be officious to impair it? No, indeed, my dear friends—such a design is so far from our hearts, that to promote your happiness in time and eternity, is the great end of all our labors!

When we would put the cross of Christ on your shoulders, and compel you to carry it; when we inculcate upon you a life of self-denial, mortification, and repentance; believe me, it is because we love you, and are fully persuaded this course will be best for you in the outcome. Do we denounce the curses of the law against you? do we severely reprove, and loudly alarm you? Why, what possible motive can we have to this—but love, honest, unselfish love! We love you—and therefore cannot bear the thought that you should perish for lack of faithful warning. Were self-love our principle, we are not so dull—but we could learn the art of flattery, and prophesy smooth things—as well as others. And will you not regard the warning of a friendly voice? Will you not fear, when love itself points out your danger, and dare conceal it no longer?

Let me also propose it to you, since your ministers love you—then ought you not to love them in return? Does not love deserve love? Ought you not to esteem them highly in love, if not for their own sake—yet "for their works sake?" 1 Thess. 5:13. And ought you not to give them proper expressions of your love, by improving their affectionate endeavors for your own benefit? Do but permit them to be the instruments of making you happy—and you gratify them in the main point. For this purpose, while they speak the truth in love—you should receive it in love; and cheerfully submit to their admonitions and reproofs; which, however often they meet with angry resentments—are the most substantial evidences of a faithful unselfish friendship which they can possibly give you.

Here also I may add, and I hope without offence, since in this place I can have no personal concern in it myself, that you should express your love to your ministers by cheerfully and generously contributing to their support. While they love you so tenderly, while they spend their time, their strength, and all their abilities in your service—can you be so sneaking, so ungenerous, so ungrateful as to leave them and their families to suffer poverty, and incur the contempt entailed upon poverty? Surely you cannot be guilty of such a conduct?

Finally, let me exhort you to love your own souls. Certainly your ministers should not be singular in this. If they are so strongly obliged to love the souls of others, surely you must be obliged to love your own soul! It may seem strange that I should exhort creatures to love themselves, whose guilt and misery are so much owing to the excess of that selfish principle. But alas! Is the soul any part of that self, which they so immoderately love? No! that precious immortal part is disregarded, as if it were but a trifling appendage, like their nails or their hair, incapable of pleasure or pain! But, oh! love your souls; make sure of their happiness, whatever becomes of you in other respects; for what would it profit you—**if you should gain the whole world, and lose your own souls!** Matthew 16:26.

Let me now resume the consideration of my subject, as it refers to us of the ministerial character. Methinks we may claim a peculiar property in this day; as we are peculiarly concerned in the business of it. We often preach to others; but let us for once preach to ourselves; and let the love of souls be the generous, and delightful subject. The subject may recommend itself; and what has been said, strongly enforces it. But, alas! I feel there is one heart among us, that stands in need of farther excitements. Therefore, though I doubt not but I might address myself to all my fathers and friends, without offence, I must indulge myself in soliloquy and preach to one that needs it most. I mean myself.

My glorious and condescending Lord, who has endowed mankind with a wise variety of capacities, and assigned to each of them his proper work, agreeably to the various exigencies of the world they inhabit, has appointed me the most pleasing work—the work of love and benevolence. He only requires me to act the friend of human nature, and show myself a lover of souls—souls whom He loves, and whom he redeemed with the blood of his heart—souls whom his Father loves; and for whom he gave up his own Son unto death—souls, whom my fellow-servants of a superior order, the blessed angels love; and to whom they concur with me in ministering—souls, precious in themselves, and of more value than the whole material universe—souls that must be happy or miserable, in the highest degree, through an immortal duration—souls united to me by the endearing ties of our common humanity—souls for whom I must give an account to the great Shepherd of souls—souls whom none hate, but the malignant ghosts of hell, and those fallen spirits in flesh, who are under their influence upon earth.

And oh! can I help loving these dear souls? Why does not my heart always glow with affection and zeal for them? Oh! why am I such a languid friend, when the love of my Master and and his Father is so ardent? when the ministers of heaven are flaming fires of love, though they do not share in the same nature? and when the object of my love is so precious and valuable?

The owners of those souls often do not love them; and they are likely to be lost forever by the neglect. Oh! shall not I love them? shall not love invigorate my hand, to pluck them out of the burning? Yes, I will, I must love them! But ah; to love them more! Glow, my zeal! kindle my affections! speak, my tongue! flow, my blood! be exerted, all my powers! be my life, if necessary, a sacrifice to save souls from death! Let labor be a pleasure; let difficulties appear glorious and inviting, in this service.

"O God of Love! kindle a flame of love in this cold heart of mine; and then I shall perform my work with alacrity and success!"

But I must drop my soliloquy and return to you my venerable friends; and I shall take up no more of your time, than just to glance at a collateral inference from my subject; and that is, if we should love our hearers, and even all mankind—then certainly we should love one another. If when we see one another—we see our friends—then how pleasing and delightful will it render all our interviews? If mutual confidence and union of hearts exists among us—then with what ease, harmony and pleasure shall we manage all our affairs? If we love one another with a pure heart fervently—then with what life and ardor will it inspire our intercessions for each other, when we are far apart, in our respective closets? How will sincere love teach us to bear one another's burdens, to sympathize with each other, to tolerate differences, to forgive infirmities, and agree to differ, that is, differ peaceably, if in anything we should differ in sentiment.

And now, our dear friends and fellow-servants in the gospel, as Moses laid his hands on Joshua, and gave him a charge, so we, in this solemn posture, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." 2 Timothy 4:1, 2. We solemnly charge you "that you may save yourselves, and those who hear you." 1 Timothy 4:16. We solemnly charge you, to "take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the

Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28.

Remember the consequences of this day's transaction will follow you through all eternity. Therefore, make it the business of your lives to perform your obligations. The oath of God is upon you, and you are witnesses against yourselves, that you have chosen the Lord for your master, to serve him. "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Acts 20:32.

We welcome you as new laborers into our Lord's vineyard; and we wish, we hope, and pray that you may long be employed there with great pleasure and success. We cannot help pouring out a torrent of fatherly wishes and prayers for you. May the great God make you able ministers of the New Testament. May you shine as illustrious luminaries in the church, "holding forth the word of life." Phil. 2:16. And may you be made the happy instruments of "turning many from darkness to light." Acts 26:18.

Oh! may your whole lives be one uninterrupted course of pleasing labor to yourselves, and extensive usefulness to the world. And when you die, may you depart with the dignity of ministers of Jesus. May this be your rejoicing in your last agonies, and in the nearest view of the supreme tribunal, "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." 2 Corinthians 1:12. And when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then may you also appear with him in glory. Col. 3:4.

O you supreme Lord of the world, and King of the church, thus let these your servants live, and thus let them die! Amen.