

St. Paul's Ethic of Becoming All Things to All Men

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Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. *I have become all things to all men* so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (I Corinthians 9:19-23)

A Slave to Everyone

Communicating the gospel to all people—telling them that Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross for their sins—is single-purposed. It is not to be carried on in order to bring outward peace to the world. It is not to be carried on to make this world a better place in which to live. And it certainly is not to be carried on for the entertainment of people. It is for the purpose of saving people from hell that the gospel is to be preached. This work, since it is all-important, ought then to be all-consuming. It ought to take precedence in the lives of all who, like the apostle Paul, have been called to be Christ's ambassadors. Speaking for himself, St. Paul put it thus: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone." As a Pharisee, Paul, then known best by his Hebrew name Saul, was under heavy obligation to his nation and to the laws and traditions of this nation. He was a slave at that time to legalism and work-righteousness. In that frame of mind and heart Paul persecuted Jesus Christ, whom he regarded as a blasphemer and a fraud, and he persecuted the church of Christ.

But Paul was released from the slavery of Phariseism and work-righteousness when he came under the grace of God and experienced Christian conversion. He felt himself obligated to please no man, and yet he obligated himself to everyone, yes, made himself a slave to all. This involved the gospel. He made himself a slave to all by obligating himself to be a witness of Christ's death and resurrection to everyone he possibly could, both Jews and Gentiles. And the reason behind his slavery to people was simply put: "To win as many as possible." Yes, to gain as many sinners as possible for the Kingdom of Heaven, releasing them in the process from slavery to sin, and from the condemnation which the law requires.

To Win As Many as Possible—to Save Some

Paul's philosophy of preaching the gospel out in the world was to do it in such a way, with such intensity, using every proper means at his disposal, that he might gain the most converts he could for Christ. And yet, Paul's intensity and ingenuity notwithstanding, he could not realistically save everyone from damnation. In his own words: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." The Lord did save some for eternity through Paul. And in the long run, the Lord will save many down through the millenia through the great number of Christians who, like Paul, obligate themselves to the eternal welfare of other sinners by preaching the gospel to them with all spiritual means at their disposal.

These words of Paul: "win as many as possible...save some," are both a challenge to our zeal and genius, as well as a comfort to us whenever we consider our poor, plodding efforts, which so often seem crowned with "minor" success. Judson labored for many years in Burma for

his first convert and then went on to win others. He won *some* for Christ and heaven. But measured by an eternity of bliss these converts inherited, Judson's success was not minor. There is joy in the presence of the angels in heaven over one convert. There was a pastor who kept a woman's name on his prospect list for 32 years. She finally was brought to Christ. The goal of winning as many as possible for Christ kept that woman's name on the pastor's list and in his prayers, and kept him from giving up in his pursuit of her soul. Thank God that the message we use is actually a divine instrument and that the results are finally the Holy Spirit's responsibility. Results there will be: one here, two there, and perhaps even a family now and then.

Methods and Attitudes Should Show a Willingness and Ability to Adapt

How human we are who hold the cross up to a dying world! How subject to sin, mistakes and shortcomings we are! Thus, it is not only important to consider the divine message that the gospel is, but also the frail human agents of God that we witness for Christ are. Let us approach the subject of this paper in prayerful and humble spirit, asking the Holy Spirit to make our bodies his dwelling places, and make us Spirit-filled witnesses for the Savior. Yes, may we all be Spirit-filled, Spirit-led witnesses who consider ourselves the slaves of all people, having the determination to be *blessings* to the gospel ministry and never *hindrances* to the Spirit's work of saving souls for heaven.

The power is in the divine Word of God. But the Word is in us and on our lips. The cause of winning souls for Christ by the gospel can be hurt by inefficient work on our part, by thoughtlessness, by arrogance, by wrong motives and by wrong methods, by inappropriate speech and actions as well as by bad mannerisms. The cause of the gospel can be hurt by what we might call a lack of plain old common sense. On the other hand, Paul reminds us of a certain ethic that ought to be found in every gospel witness to enhance his ministry: that of having the ability and willingness to adapt to people, and to adjust to environment, customs, and situations. Paul had and used such ability. Indeed, it became a part of his personality after his conversion and subsequent training by the Lord.

The ethic of becoming "all things to all men" simply meant that Paul was able to put himself in the place of the people he was trying to save and approach them accordingly, in whatever manner was necessary in order to communicate with them. Paul understood people. He was a well-educated man, and he was ingenious, thus able to relate to people in such ways as to gain their confidence while avoiding arousing their suspicion, distrust, or antagonism toward himself and his message. Paul placed himself in the people's shoes, taking into consideration their nationality, language, customs and traditions, as well as their religious background and beliefs. Paul also considered the people's degree of learning, especially their proficiency in Scripture. He was deliberate in his words and actions, never thoughtless or careless. Christ's love in him was always the motive.

Paul's Adaptability to the Jews

Paul pointed out: "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews." The apostle said that he became "like" a Jew. Note that. He did not say that he became a Jew while he was among the Jews, thus reverting back to the Jewish religion. He became "like" a Jew. He "became like one under the law" to those under the law. When Paul was laboring among Jews he was careful to conduct himself in such a way that he was accepted by them—if not always for his message, at least in his personal actions. Paul adapted his own life-style to that of the Jews who were living under the old Mosaic laws and the Jewish traditions and customs. Paul was a tent-maker by trade, and made his living as a missionary by sewing and selling tents. When he plied his trade among Jews who still observed the Sabbath, Paul also ceased from work. In addition, he

was careful concerning his dietary habits around those who still were conscience-bound to the old prohibitions, lest he cause offense among them. Paul even appeared at services held at Jewish synagogues, making strong effort to be present in Jerusalem at feast time. If Paul would not have conducted himself “like one under the law,” while among those who were under the law he would most certainly have caused deep offense and aroused no little amount of antagonism, not only against himself but against the gospel he preached. He would have been accused by the Jewish conscience of being an evil-doer.

Let’s bear in mind that every witness for Jesus must so conduct himself that the people look past him to the Savior, whose royal ambassador he is. The ambassador can harm his message by calling undue attention to himself, especially by, causing people to react negatively toward him because he has offended them in some way—or has caused needless conflict and controversy. Negative feelings that could have been avoided. Yes, Paul tried to fit in, and not attract too much attention to his own person, especially avoiding conduct that would cause people to label him an evil-doer and a troublemaker.

While Paul was careful not to offend the Jews by flagrant unJewish conduct when he was in their midst, he did not on the other hand *teach* people to abide by the Jewish customs and Mosaic laws. He was acting with gentlemanly grace and dignity befitting a servant of God who had made himself a slave to all people, so that his actions blended in with the circumstances at hand. And he did this so that the work of Christ would not be hindered.

These people were scrupulous about legal prescriptions, and Paul accommodates himself to them when preaching the gospel, carefully avoiding anything that might arouse their antagonism. He thus observed their laws regarding food, drink, and similar matters. (I.II Corinthians, R.C.H. Lenski, p. 382.)

But Paul had to consider his role of becoming all things to all men, his being like a Jew among Jews, not only when it came to his work among non-Christian Jews, but even in the presence of Christian Jews. Recall that about the time he was preparing to set out on his second missionary journey to carry the gospel to Europe—which journey would bring him into contact with large numbers of Gentiles—the young church was threatened by schism. The Christian Jews down in Jerusalem, exposed daily to a concentrated Jewish religious fervor, still held to some of the Jewish laws and customs. Thus the question arose: Should the Gentiles be admitted into the church merely on profession of faith in Christ, or should they be expected to be circumcised and to observe certain taboos regarding food? The first Christian Council in history was convened at Jerusalem to settle this vexing question. Present at this historic Council were Paul, Peter, and James. The three of them agreed that to require the Gentiles to observe the Mosaic laws would amount to tempting God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples “that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear.” And so their conclusion was: “No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:10, 11).

What hold then should the Old Testament ceremonial laws and the customs of the Jews have on the New Testament church, which included in its ranks an ever-growing number of Gentiles? In arriving at the answer, the Jerusalem Council was happy to follow Simon Peter’s recommendation that the Gentiles who turn to God be told in a letter that they abstain from pollutions of idols and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood. The reason? “For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath” (Acts 15:20, 21). And so, circumcision was not to be required since it was an explicit sign of the old covenant which had been replaced by the new. Only those observances

were required which were outward, public, everyday observances. By keeping them, the Gentile Christians could thus prevent offending the sense of the weak Jewish Christians. And furthermore, they would keep from unduly antagonizing the non-Christian Jews among whom they lived and worked and witnessed. This course of action was a matter of expediency for the time in which they lived.

In Romans, the 14th chapter, we see how carefully Paul taught Christian love, understanding, and patience toward those who were yet unsure in their own minds concerning the freedom from the law which the gospel of Christ gives Christians. Paul's teaching in this matter can be summed up in these words of his: "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil." (Romans 14:13-16).

The ends to which Paul was willing to go in order to avoid offending the Jewish converts to Christianity is exemplified in an episode that occurred in Jerusalem. He had been arranging his work so that he could make it back to the capital by Pentecost. When Paul finally arrived in Jerusalem he reported to the Christian Jews the great things God had worked among the Gentiles by his ministry. While the people were glad for these results, praising God for them, they were also concerned about Paul's reputation among the many thousands of Christian Jews who not only had come to believe in the Savior, but also were still zealous for the law. From things they had heard about Paul's work they had gotten the impression that the Jewish Christians were not to circumcise their children or live according to Jewish custom. They believed Paul prohibited this. There were many Jewish Christians who were not prepared in their minds to divorce themselves completely from Moses and from customs long observed in their households. There was still much national fervor among the Jewish converts. They tended, many of them, to "remain with the old." Unlike the rabble-rousing Judaizers, who were such burrs under Paul's saddle, these Christian Jews did not make observance of Mosaic regulations necessary to salvation. It was simply a matter of long-standing custom with them.

The church elders at Jerusalem hit on a plan to enable Paul to act as a *Jewish* Christian among *Jewish* Christians. Among the Christian Jews at Jerusalem were four men who had taken vows. The elders suggested that Paul accompany the men to the temple and join in their purification rites and also pay the necessary amount to the priests in behalf of the four men so that they could be released from their vows, thus acting as sponsor or benefactor to them. Paul agreed to do this: "The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them (which sometimes took a week to schedule)" (see Acts 21:17-26).

And now, an important point must be added to the picture of Paul becoming "all things to all men" and of being "like a Jew" among the Jews. That he in no way wished to leave the impression that he actually gave in to Jewish doctrine when among the legalistic Jews, he declared in these words: "...though I myself am not under the law." All Christians are free now and forever from the ceremonial laws of the old covenant (e.g. circumcision, sabbaths, dietary restrictions, etc.) and Paul counted himself free. Furthermore, he was among the first to oppose anyone who in any way tried to intimidate Christians with the regulations of Moses, requiring the observance of laws in addition to faith in Christ for eternal salvation. Such had fallen from grace, he warned. No! Paul would give no quarter to Judaizers who legislated salvation instead

of proclaiming it to be the product of pure grace on the part of God. Among the Jewish Christians (Acts 16:3) Paul had Timothy circumcised, that their work be not hindered by causing offense. But among the Judaizers, he refused to circumcise Titus (Galatians 2:3-5).

Recall the piercing and stern rebuke which Paul gave to the Christians in Galatia. Having once abandoned the ceremonial law of the Old Testament they had, because of false teachings of the Judaizers, returned to the law, thus ruining their own confession of faith unto salvation. Paul scolded: "But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?...It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery...You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace...The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 4:9-11; 5:1, 4, 6).

Consider further what it meant for Paul to be all things to all men in his work among the Jews. When Paul preached to the Jews in the synagogue it was with a rabbi's skill. He knew his Bible, as the Jews required their teachers to know their Bible. When he preached Christ as Lord and Savior he did not isolate Christ but put Christ in his preaching where Christ belonged: with the Old Testament passages that foretold the coming of the Messiah. Paul preached Christ as the fulfiller of those promises which God had made to their people in ages past. Paul would recite passage after passage to prove that Jesus is truly the Christ and the Son of God who should come to the world.

Acts 13:16-41 is an excellent example of how Paul, a Jew, preached to the Jews out of their own Scripture. Here he traces the coming of the Savior through King David's line as God promised. The Jews were proud to be called the descendants of Abraham, and they were well aware of the fact that to Abraham's descendant, King David, a righteous Branch had been promised, a King to sit on David's throne and reign eternally. Paul took advantage of the Messianic fervor among the Jews and called on them to personally regard Jesus Christ as this descendant of King David. For the skeptics, Paul recounted that there had been witnesses to Christ who had seen him following his resurrection. Paul clinched his testimony to the Jews with a powerful warning and call to faith: "But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: 'Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish...'" (Acts 13:37-41a).

And so, Paul preached truth. He also made a profound use of human psychology. Furthermore he was bold in his preaching, and sure of himself and of the Savior he represented. His testimony attracted many people, both Jews and religious proselytes, to follow him and his co-workers. Paul was no stranger to his Lord, nor to the Scripture which reveals the Lord to men. He spoke with conviction and certainty of the proofs that were at hand, proving that Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified and who had risen again has fulfilled what the Scripture prophesied. Paul could answer questions put to him by hours and by days. Of course he did not win all the Jews. He did not win most of the Jews. He did not win half of the Jews. He won as many as he could. He saved some. And all things considered, even that was a miracle. But winning some is what the Lord had sent the apostle to do, and that is what Paul was pleased to do. He poured his heart and soul into his preaching, and the people could see this. His fervor, his sincerity, and his knowledge widely attracted people to come and hear him out.

That Paul's reputation at times was questioned because of his completely open and honest and forceful presentation of the gospel is no secret. He had the lumps to show how little some thought of him and of the Christ he preached. Yet, Paul was only following in the footsteps of the Master he served. Remember how Jesus was criticized for eating with publicans and sinners. Our Lord was not so much concerned about his reputation as about his duty. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He had to go where the lost were. But Jesus never sinned. Any accusations brought against him were unfair and unjust. If one has a solid character (Jesus did, for he never sinned), his reputation, though called into question due to time and circumstances and the people's prejudices, should survive. God is, after all, on the side of the righteous. Paul, the servant, learned from his Master the art of being "all things to all men," to the extreme of placing duty above reputation, and even suffering for it. This, in itself, was a tremendous display of character and courage...and love.

Paul's Adaptability to the Gentiles

Of course, Paul found himself preaching a great deal to the Gentiles, as we have already pointed out. He had this to say about his work among the non-Jews: "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law." The Gentiles did not have the Word of God and therefore were without the Old Testament legal code by which God regulated his chosen nation Israel. Paul accommodated himself to the non-converted Jews when he was among them by keeping some of their laws and customs outwardly. By the same token, since he also wanted to gain the Gentiles for Christ and not in any way lay a stumbling block of antagonism in their way, he also then adapted to their customs when he was among them, except where these were in conflict with godliness. The custom of the Gentiles was not to observe Jewish laws. Thus, it was the Jewish Messiah, not the Jewish laws and customs that Paul offered to the Gentiles.

But this in no way infers that Paul was lacking in guiding principles, principles that finally ruled his conduct and raised him above the level of the religion and morality of the pagans. Paul's conduct was godly and moral since it was determined by Christ's law to which he subjected himself. In preaching the gospel to people, the entire agenda that Paul followed was carried out in the tradition of Christ's law of love. Paul confessed: "For Christ's love compels us...he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Christ loved Paul and gave himself into death for him. Paul loved Christ in return, and out of that love served his Savior by preaching his name and salvation, and by keeping up a morally decent and upright life. Being in Christ's law amounts to confessing him with one's lips and confessing him with one's life out of love for him. Paul's philosophy for living a well-regulated moral life is summed up, for example, in these words to Titus: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:11-14).

Paul was free from keeping the law of God as the means to gain favor with God and have everlasting life. But Paul was under Christ's law—serving Christ, serving the gospel, and serving the moral law—for the very reason that he knew he was loved by the Savior. Christ's love for him filled him with love, and this love governed his actions. But the law of Christ, his law of love, is the compelling force in our activities too as witnesses for Christ. We all stand cleansed

of our sins through the cross, and it is with the cross of Christ, and the divine love it represents, laid upon our hearts that we go forward carrying the cross out into the world to people who are going to die in their sins without it. We go out to them with Christ's love filling our hearts and overflowing to them.

Paul's Adaptability to the Weak

There is a final group of people to whom Paul refers: "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak." Paul's business, as it is the business of every Christian, especially every Christian pastor, is not only to save the non-Christian, but to keep the Christian saved. There is constant mission work to be done among weak Christians. These are Christians who have little knowledge of the Bible, possibly few Christian experiences of trial and testing. They waver between truth and error, between faith and doubt. They love Christ, but weakly and the forces of evil make impressions on their hearts and work an element of control in their lives. They have a hard time resisting the devil. They find it difficult to flee temptation, and they are tempted, like Demas, to love this present world. The weak can easily be made to stumble over temptation and fall into sin. They are in constant danger of being turned off in their Christian faith. Paul was able and willing to relate to the weak. He came to them, not to pass judgment on their weak faith but to be sympathetic, desiring only to coax the weak faith to grow strong. Often he had to cope with superstitions which many times cling to converts from paganism.

The difficulty of separating converts to Christianity from all elements of their former paganism can be attested to by some of our missionaries. Some years ago, one of our pastors in Apache Land provided me an illustration of this very thing. When a carpenter in one of his congregations died, his fellow-Apache Christians gathered up his tools and buried them with him so that he would be able to continue his trade in the after life. Do some converts from paganism ever succeed in completely throwing off all their former superstitions? But progress can be made when the weak are helped to grow in their knowledge of God and the Scripture, especially the gospel. Paul encourages us to be tender and patient and understanding toward the weak. Spiritual weakness calls for spiritual vitamins and minerals from the food of God's Word. The weak are suffering from spiritual malnutrition. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

Paul's all-around adaptability to people and circumstances made it possible for him to build rapport where it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to do otherwise. Paul was adaptable because he had empathy, the ability to place himself in the shoes of others.

St. Paul's Ethic of Becoming All Things to All Men—Having the Ability to Adapt—Should Be Our Ethic Too

We Ought to Adapt to People's Special Needs

We ought to adapt to people's special needs by first emphasizing with them in their plights, and secondly, by showing loving concern. Hearts can be softened toward our ministry of the Word when we show genuine concern toward people in need. Concern born of love.

One of the ways in which we can do this is by going to the bedside of people who are ill. While speaking to them briefly of God, who alone is Healer, and of Jesus Christ his Son, who is the Divine Physician to heal souls and give eternal life, we can also offer to take their plight to our Lord in prayer as we stand or sit at their bedside. The very fact that we show this loving concern for them may soften their attitude toward us and our Christian testimony. By the words of our prayer we can not only storm the throne of the Almighty in their behalf, but teach them how to confess their sins and how to ask forgiveness of God in the name of Jesus Christ. One of

Isaiah's prophecies of Christ states: "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). This was fulfilled in Jesus' healing and preaching ministry. Our Lord had empathy, understanding intuitively the special needs of others. And he adapted to those needs, working to supply them because he had genuine love and concern for both men's bodies and their souls. This endeared him to many people and opened doors for preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.

I want to tell you the true story of an elderly man who, with his wife, was a member of a congregation that I pastored years ago. This man was well-known in the community but had never joined a church. That is, until he experienced the love and sympathy of my predecessor. This pastor was a godly man with an intense love and concern for souls. He had been visiting the elderly man and his wife in their home over a period of time but with little success. When the pastor heard of the man's hospitalization, he made it a point to be often at his bedside. He offered up many a prayer to God in the man's behalf. The patient recovered and together with his wife soon enrolled in an instruction course, later joining the church. Several times this gentleman related to me the love he had for the man of God who so faithfully saw him while he was in the hospital and prayed for his recovery. When he finally had his health restored he considered it nothing short of an act of God. He needed no more convincing as to what yet needed to be done in his life. After all, the man of God had come and prayed for him, and lovingly, gently spoken to him of spiritual matters.

A middle-aged lady and her husband were the parents of one of the members in the congregation I pastored. The husband had been confirmed a Lutheran in his youth, but had gotten away from his Lord and the church, and stayed away for many years. The wife did not belong to any church and had never been baptized. She would at times go into deep depression, and in one of these mood swings she attempted suicide. I visited her in the hospital and found her in a semi-comatose condition. I spoke to her briefly about her merciful Lord who forgives sins and who helps us in our troubles. I then prayed a brief but fervent prayer in her behalf, little knowing at the time what effect, if any, my words had on her numbed brain. By God's grace she recovered. Led further by divine grace she requested Christian instructions and joined the church. Then her husband appeared before the congregation and reaffirmed his faith. The woman then proceeded to turn two other families to the Savior. Once she told me: "Pastor, I heard every word you said to me in the hospital. You will never know how much it meant to me that you came and prayed for me." Here then is a challenge not only for us pastors, but for lay Christians as well: make it a point to minister to people's special needs. Be loving.

We cannot minister to everyone's needs and we cannot minister to all their needs. But we can strive to show loving concern in every situation where we have reason to believe this loving concern would be especially appreciated, and where it would serve to reinforce the love of Christ which we proclaim. Examples: offer rides to the homebound, take food (i.e. from the church pantry) to the needy, offer a word of sympathy and encouragement to the grieving and others under stress, visit the imprisoned, etc.

We Ought to Adapt to People by Communicating Meaningfully with Them

When we strive to relate to others, to build up rapport with them, we should deliver our message in terms they understand. Are they perceiving what we are saying, or are they merely hearing noise?

One hindrance to communication is the use of terms and phrases the receiver doesn't know. There is nothing wrong with using such expressions as "being saved," "surrendering yourself to Christ," "redemption," "propitiation," and "sanctification," providing the hearer is

familiar with them. But to a person who has no religious background at all, they become “noise,” and actually interrupt communication.

...Every missionary to primitive tribes knows that communication, to be effective, must be delivered in terms of the receiving group...Empathy is a significant part of the communication theory. It is described as the “process through which one arrives at expectations and anticipations of the internal psychological state of others.” More simply, “it is putting oneself in the place of others to establish rapport.” Christ commands us to love even those who despise us and do us evil. Thus empathy becomes a mode of spiritual communication. If we are to communicate with those we hope to reach for Christ, we must recognize that channels of empathy exist in common interests and problems, common vocabulary, and common activities. In reaching his generation Paul became “all things to all men” through Christ-controlled empathy. (Pastor Kenneth Vertz, WELS, in a conference essay.)

There are innumerable examples from the mission field that would illustrate this ability to communicate with men in understandable terms, in ways that meet them on common ground, and that engender mutual respect and acceptance. Dr. Niels Brønnum labored in Nigeria. He was a layman missionary. This is said of him:

His humility, kindness, understanding, and sense of humor brought respect and love from Nigerians and fellow missionaries alike. He knew medicine, but even more, he knew God. He also knew people and learned to know the Bahamas so well that his notes remain the basis for present-day anthropological studies of this tribe. (Missionary Pioneers of the American Lutheran Church, Lowell L. Hesterman.)

Of Daniel Nelson an early Lutheran missionary in China, a colleague said:

“He kept abreast of the times and had a remarkable grasp of affairs, both religious and secular.” (Missionary Pioneers.)

Hans Pauludan Smith Schreuder (1817-82) tried to get into Zululand as a Lutheran missionary. The local African king would not even grant him an audience, and ordered him to leave. Schreuder then went to Hong Kong, but was turned back because of his long blond hair. He simply couldn't make himself look Chinese. He went back to Zululand. He had a knowledge of medicine and when he heard that the king, who before had treated him so discourteously, had an ailment, he offered to help him. The king needed what Schreuder had to offer. Through the missionary's knowledge of medicine this Norwegian Lutheran was able to communicate with the king and get his foot at last in the door of Zululand.

We have some fine examples within our own synod of workers with God-given talents who are (or were) able to communicate meaningfully with people in their own language, on their own turf. Men who adapted to others in culture, custom, and language. One especially comes to mind: a missionary of much talent, deep feeling for people, possessing great knowledge and all-around talent—which assets greatly enhanced his ability to communicate meaningfully and successfully with people of a far-different culture and language. I am referring to Dr. Francis J. Uplegger (1867-1964), to whom his Apache friends quite naturally gave the title...“The Venerable Missionary.”

For, from the early days in the twenties when he first talked to them about the true Lord of Life, God's only-begotten Son Jesus Christ their Savior, or when he began to listen to them most carefully and to write down the words of their Apache mother tongue, and then to use these words to make plain the Word of God which he brought, they knew him to be a gentleman and a gentle man of God who gave them understanding, hope, and life.

His manners and appearance were courtly, his speech and gesturing dramatic, his carriage stately, whether he sat a horse or sat beside them on the red earth of the San Carlos desert, urging them with earnest, kindly, and vivid words to bethink them of their sinful mortal lot and of their high destiny as the sons and daughters of God, the Lord of Life, through Christ Jesus...Always and above all, he was a preacher and pastor of the gospel of Christ. All his other talents had to serve this, his beloved calling. He was a deep theologian...His alma mater conferred the honorary Doctor of Divinity on him in 1957 in recognition of his labors for the gospel...He was a clear thinker, a patient teacher, and a versatile linguist. Beside the German, he mastered English without an accent, Norwegian, Danish, and Apache. He had a reading knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, as well as French and Navajo, and a bit of Spanish. Using these gifts, he gave his Apaches and his colleagues many of the Biblical treasures of truth, the *Small Catechism*, and the *Lutheran Liturgy* in their difficult tongue. This he reduced to grammatical order and phonetical, written form for the first time. Twenty-five Christian hymns were composed by him to teach his people to sing their faith around their campfires. His sermons were delivered in his classical Apache, appreciated especially by those who saw their mother tongue corrupted through the absorption of words of the Spanish and English vernacular. His research and rendering of clear Scriptural thought and terminology are priceless in building the faith and Christian understanding of his people upon the pure Word and doctrine. He understood, and we all have learned from him, that this is basic for our whole World Mission program, if we would be true to our charge from the Lord. Dr. Francis J. Uplegger was also a builder, a poet, an artist, and a friendly, understanding tribal counselor. (*The Northwestern Lutheran*, July 26, 1964.)

Whenever we speak to others as witnesses for Christ, let us neither use terms that go over their heads, which is to act arrogantly, nor talk below their level of understanding, for then we would be guilty of patronizing them. No one likes an arrogant fellow, and no one likes to be patronized. Talking to people in language that is on their level of understanding shows respect for their feelings and for them as individuals. It shows empathy. Furthermore, when we communicate with people let us not lose their confidence by a lack of expertise in the subject matter at hand. Let us know whereof we speak. First, strive for a thorough knowledge of the Bible and for a good grasp of Christian doctrine and church history. But let us also be familiar with current events. Whenever we speak, let us know whereof we speak, and be able to verbalize our thoughts clearly, concisely, and in a way we can be easily understood. Not to be argumentative, but to gain people's confidence and respect. No one really wins an argument anyway. At the same time, let us strive for a good understanding of human nature so that we can judge how fast to proceed and how thorough to make our presentation. In our ability to understand others and to put ourselves in their places, we must try to sense, for example, their lack of knowledge of sin and grace and thus their lack of preparedness to receive the gospel. And we should sense the speed at which we can help them develop their knowledge of Scripture truths. Many people are unable to receive at first more than a few well-chosen morsels of spiritual food. We must then be careful neither to go over their heads, or cram a lot of facts down their throats when they are simply not equipped to swallow and digest them. With proper empathy we can judge the people's response. Thus, we should try to determine: are we being well-received, or are we approaching people in such a manner that we are antagonizing them? Is what we are saying of interest to them, or do the people appear to be bored? Is our approach, our language, our way of presentation turning people off?

We meet a lodge man. He has had little or no religious instruction. He is seeking spiritual counsel and church affiliation. He has great confidence in us. And now, instead of discoursing with him on sin and grace, on faith and service, on church and Christian education, we speak on lodgism in our very first call, pointing out to him the Christlessness and damnableness of the religion of all fraternal orders. We part at a late hour of the evening, mentally patting ourselves on the back for having scored a victory; but, lo, as we leave, we receive a somewhat cold and clammy handshake. We haven't taken many steps before we realize that in our attempt to force an issue in a matter for which our prospective churchgoer wasn't at all prepared, we have in all likelihood closed the door to all future missionary opportunities. Guilty or not? (*Approach To The Unchurched*, Philip Lange, p. 53.)

Often-times pastors and/or members of the board of elders call on the delinquents in the congregation, urging them to come to church (would it be better to use the term "God's house?") and perhaps even threatening them with excommunication or loss of membership if they don't comply. The delinquents are told that they haven't been to communion for a year or two or three, and will be expected at the next Lord's Supper that is offered. And later the pastor and/or elders wonder that their talks didn't do any good. The members they visited remain delinquents. Little wonder! The pastor and/or elders did not anticipate the fact that in many cases delinquents are no longer believers. What was needed on their visits was not so much an urging to attend church and the communion table, but an earnest exhortation to renew their relationship with God through Jesus.

We must put ourselves in the place of that member or mission prospect we want to call on, and do it in various ways if we would gain their confidence, relate to them, be their friend, communicate meaningfully with them, and not close the door on ourselves. We should avoid a better-than-thou attitude when talking with people. We are sinners too. Therefore, let us talk to others as sinners to sinners, but let us also talk to them as the enlightened, regenerated people that we are, and do so with the purpose of sharing our wonderful state with them so that they can go to heaven with us. And another thing: we should be careful that we don't frustrate people with whom we are communicating by acting in a cavalier manner by not taking their questions or doubts seriously. We should try to furnish the answers, while also trying to sense the reasons for their questions and doubts.

There are others things we can also do to aid in communicating with people, or should we say, to avoid bad communication. For example, we should respect their time, their feelings, their right to entertain company without interference, their working and sleeping and eating habits, their leisure hours, and the like, even as we want these things respected when they apply to ourselves. Simply put: we must respect other people—their rights and their feelings—and do to them as we would like people to do to us. We would do well to stop and ponder: what can I do and what can I say and how can I act and react in order to make myself and my message acceptable to this person I wish to communicate with? Have empathy. Be all things to all men. Show them that you love them.

In Adapting to People We Ought to Avoid Being Intolerant

Intolerance toward others is a powerful obstacle to communication. Intolerance often contributes to the hatred and violence and mistrust that so often mars relationships between individuals and even nations. But don't take me wrong. I am in no way inferring that we need not have convictions or that we are not to stand up for what we believe to be the truth. We have many injunctions in Scripture urging us to know the truth, to teach and defend the truth, and

above all to believe the truth. “For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth” (2 Corinthians 13:8). St. Paul’s several exhortations to Timothy and Titus to preach and teach only the truth and to beware of false teachers and false teachings, ring in our ears. And yet, we must be careful when dealing with those who know less than we do of Scripture, or who have religious convictions that don’t measure up to the Bible and to ours, that we do not become impatient with them, or give them the impression that we are arrogant and even self-righteous. They would certainly judge us as obnoxious, insensitive persons if we demand that they see it our way immediately otherwise be branded as false teachers or false Christians.

We can quickly alienate people if we use the cold approach: “My doxy is orthodoxy, and any other doxy—including your doxy—is heterodoxy.”

When we give way to our natural impulses we are impatient and intolerant. It is this spirit that has poured the gall of bitterness without measure into social and domestic life, filled neighborhoods with discord, sown the seeds of strife among the nations of mankind and not infrequently deluged the earth with blood.

We may not agree with the next statement in its entirety, nevertheless, some valid points are made:

There must be respect for other men’s convictions. These are things to which men come, often by painful effort, and always with solemnity. Few men are willing to abandon them without a struggle. They may be false, but they are precious. Not infrequently they are interwoven with the holiest traditions. For the sake of them, their holders are frequently willing and eager to wear the martyr’s crown. The fact that we may know or think we know other men’s convictions to be false, does not alter the obligation to treat them with respect...One lesson which the experience of human conflict clearly taught is that before there can be liberty for a new thought there must be deference and courtesy paid to the older belief. (*Great Texts of the Bible*, Vol. XV.)

When we pry people from their old, false beliefs (e.g. the lodge member, the Mormon, the evolutionist, etc.), we do so with patience and understanding, with tact and love, with empathy. St. Paul took the time to reason with people out of the Scripture. He took pains to *show* people the error of their beliefs; he didn’t just *tell* them they were wrong. Read once again Acts, chapter seventeen, to see the approach Paul made to the Athenians while he was standing on Mars Hill. This was a tactful, respectful approach if ever there was one. Let us not go through the field with the plow and expect to return with the reaper. Give new things a chance to soak into men’s brains and find the way to men’s hearts. Let that seed we plant have a chance to germinate and grow and bear fruit. Someone once said that you can send a message around the world in 1/200th of a second, and yet it may take years to transmit a simple idea through a quarter inch of human skull. Patience, tact, empathy, resourcefulness, humility are all things that are needed on our part to uproot the old and instill the new in people’s minds and hearts. And the basis for all of this is a deep, abiding brotherly love that uses as its model Christ’s love for us.

In the Pulpit, We Ought to Adapt Ourselves to the Wonderful Challenges of Preaching to Others, to Their Needs, Empathizing With Them

Sermons are not sermons unless they reach men. And we have not reached men unless we get them to look past us to see themselves as sinners in the mirror of the divine law, and to look past us to the cross to view Jesus Christ their Savior and Substitute. A sermon must reach out from the pulpit with the power of persuasion to achieve in the hearer both moral and spiritual ends. If our preaching doesn’t use the power of persuasion is it really preaching? If it doesn’t relate to the hearer’s spiritual needs is it really preaching? Ronald Colman once commented,

“Just because a man stands up in a pulpit and talks, he isn’t necessarily delivering a sermon—any more than if your cat had kittens in the oven they’d be biscuits.” Pity the man who spends his twenty minutes in the pulpit each week because that’s what he is paid to do.

We have all heard the expression: “Dull as a sermon.” A lack of personal conviction and faith on the part of the preacher can certainly contribute to pointless, boring sermons that offer little or no challenge to the hearts of the hearers to set their spiritual houses in order. When we speak from the pulpit let us speak out of conviction and out of faith—with enthusiasm and with urgency—that we might convict the consciences and turn the hearts of our hearers. The Holy Spirit flows out as streams of living water from our hearts to the hearts of our hearers when we speak the Word of God which we know and believe to be the truth (John 7:38).

The real crisis in communication (i.e. of the Word of God) is perhaps a crisis of faith rather than a crisis of communication. I think there are, unfortunately, a great many people professionally involved in religion today—such as theologians and pastors—who are in a similar situation as mentioned by our Lord of the “blind leading the blind.” I mean, they have largely lost their own faith. I don’t think you can ever communicate anything to any body until you deeply believe it yourself. (Louis Cassels, UPI religious editor.)

Let us speak of sin in our sermons in such a manner that we not only acknowledge but also feel to the depths of our souls our own sins. When we speak to the consciences of others, our own consciences must groan under the awful burden of sin. The law that whips others should make us smart too. And so, in being all things to all men in the pulpit, we must preach as dying men to dying men.

And then, that he may be a living channel, a witness of the truth which he proclaims, the preacher asks: What is the meaning of this text to me? He sends his soul into the closet with the Word and the Spirit of God. There he searches himself and his life as if he were the only sinner on earth. And when he is done with the ordeal—for that it truly is—he will be ready to preach the law somewhat after the manner of John Bunyan in *Grace Abounding*: “I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment. Indeed, I have been as one sent to them from the dead; I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains, and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to be aware of. (*Nothing and All*, a booklet by Oswald Riess.)

And when we preach the gospel to sinners persuaded of their sins, let it be for the reason that the peace of Christ which transcends all understanding is ruling our own hearts and quieting our consciences. When we speak of Jesus Christ to our audiences let those words come from men who have an intense personal relationship with the Savior, men who have wintered and summered with Christ. Let us speak of the love of God in Christ as men who are themselves consumed by the love that the Savior demonstrated on the cross. Let us believe, and therefore let us speak. Let us comfort with the gospel because we ourselves are mightily comforted by the good news that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom we count ourselves (1 Timothy 1:15).

As we preach we realize that our audiences are made up of many kinds of people from various walks of life, with an infinite variety of backgrounds. They have come to God’s house and to our pulpit with different problems and a variety of needs. Their degree of faith and understanding of Scripture varies too from person to person. How can one man in one sermon possibly reach everyone? Joseph Parker once said: “He that preaches to broken hearts, to tired

lives, to disappointed hopes, preaches to all time.” And we might add, to all people. Simply preach the Word of God with full emphasis on the gospel. The moral and spiritual needs of people are all fulfilled there in the Word. This Word scolds, directs, counsels, comforts, feeds, strengthens, and saves. So then, let us know the Word. Let us preach and teach the Word. And nothing else.

Let us not be afraid to preach to the church with conviction, with openness, and with candor. Let us speak plainly and unashamedly and without apology the truth—God’s Word. Let us not dress it up in what the world might consider a more respectable and acceptable garb. Let’s not change the truth or water it down or disguise it to make it more appealing to people of modern times. Let’s not soft-soap the truth. The modern church has been characterized as being composed of “soft music, soft pews, and soft soap.” We must be preachers who stand in our pulpits to fill people with the fear of God and to warn them of the wrath of God that is coming on the world. Let us not tone down hell.

Actually this toning down of hell as a place of judgment has reached the point where even as a cuss word it is rather weak. One columnist...contended that “hell” just doesn’t belong any more in the lexicon of cursing, that it has little more muscle than fiddlesticks.” (*Decision Magazine*, Leslie K. Tarr.)

On the other hand, let us use our pulpits to snatch immortal souls from the fire and brimstone of an eternal hell. Let us preach *Christ*, not just *about* Christ. Let us make it perfectly, wonderfully, unmistakably clear that there is no other highway to heaven but Jesus Christ, that there is no other bridge across the chasm of divine wrath than the cross. Let us tell the truth and call men to faith and repentance. Let us draw a line in the dust and ask all to step over that line to the side of Christ, entrusting their hearts to him and dedicating their whole lives to his service. But as we preach Christ and the cross to others, let us convey to them our own faith. We call for dedication to the cross—let them see in us a fine example of it, as the people of Paul’s day saw such an example in his life. He endured the loss of all things in order that he might know Christ as his personal Savior and preach Christ as Savior to others.

The preacher must prepare his sermons carefully. What is the rule?—an hour in the study for each minute in the pulpit? That’s not far-fetched. Sermonizing is work and the people who come to hear us have every right to expect that we have done our homework. They can tell if we have...or have not. The preacher, in preaching, has no call to be trivial. There is no need for triviality and triteness in preaching. Someone has said that the trivialization of preaching is one of the chief sources of weakness in the church. And the weakness in many sermons is that there is no depth to them. Even the uneducated can recognize triviality in the pulpit. On a given Sunday in many a church across this land, God’s people come to the pulpit hungry for spiritual food—and go away starved.

God’s Word is more than mere words. It is truth, and meaning, and spirit, and life. These can be destroyed by plain, dull, listless talk or drivel that leaves little to the Spirit of God in the Word and in the hearer. In the same way we pastors can actually block the Holy Spirit by poor or no preparation at all, by strange and distracting pulpit mannerisms, which once acquired are so hard to break, and by a lack of zeal and conviction in presenting Christ to our hearers. (Pastor Kenneth Vertz, WELS, in a conference essay.) How much we need the Holy Spirit’s grace as we prepare and deliver our sermons!

Adaptability Means Also the Ability to be Ingenious In Our Approach to People

It has been said that sanctified ingenuity is a gift to be prized highly, both for its value and for its rarity. If we are ingenious in our approach to people we will, for example, make use of

the best tools available to us whenever possible. We will also use methods of approach to people that will open the door and keep it open so that we can go on speaking to them of sin and grace. Furthermore, we will strive to have class in the way we dress and in the manner in which we conduct ourselves. If we are truly ingenious, we will never have to sacrifice our dignity in order to gain acceptance by the persons we are attempting to reach. We will reach intuitively into their lives with whatever it takes to build up a rapport between them and us, while remaining true to our God, ourselves and our calling.

A certain shoemaker, radical and infidel, was among the number of those under Irving's special care; a home-workman of course, always present, silent, with his back turned upon the visitors, and refusing any communication except a sullen "humph" of implied criticism, while his trembling wife made her deprecating curtsy in the foreground...Approaching the bench one day, the visitor (Irving) took up a piece of patent leather, then a recent invention, and remarked upon it in somewhat skilled terms. The shoemaker went on with redoubled industry at his work; but at last, roused and exasperated by the speech and pretence of knowledge, demanded, in great contempt, but without raising his eyes, "What do ye ken about leather?" This was just the opportunity his assailant wanted; for Irving, though a minister and a scholar, was a tanner's son, and could discourse learnedly upon the material. Gradually interested and mollified, the cobbler slackened work, and listened while his visitor described some process of making shoes by machinery, which he had carefully got up for the purpose. At last the shoemaker so far forgot his caution as to suspend his work altogether, and lifted his eyes to the great figure stooping over his bench. The conversation went on with increased vigour after this, till finally the recusant threw down his arms:—"Od you're a decent kind o' fellow!—do you preach? said the vanquished, curious to know more of his victor. The advantage was discreetly, but not too hotly pursued; and on the following Sunday the rebel made a defiant, shy appearance at church. Next day Irving encountered him in the savoury Gallowgate, and hailed him as a friend...(The shoemaker's) children henceforward went to school; his deprecating wife went to the kirk in peace. He himself acquired that suit of Sunday "blacks" so dear to the heart of the poor Scotchman, and became a churchgoer and respectable member of society; while his acknowledgment of his conqueror was conveyed with characteristic reticence, and concealment of all deeper feeling, in the self-excusing pretence—"He's a sensible man, yon; he kens about leather!" (*Great Texts of the Bible*, Volume XV, pp. 252-253)

We can all think of subtle approaches to people to win their confidence, approaches to people that will go far in enabling us to meet them on their turf and communicate with them in ways they can both appreciate and understand (as did Irving in the above illustration). May I be so bold as to cite an example from my own ministry? Years ago I knew a man who was unchurched, who was notorious both for his profanity and his negative attitude toward church and preachers. I learned from the local newspaper that he built elaborate, large-scale models of naval ships as a hobby. He really loved ships. I too am fond of naval vessels and have toured quite a few large ships. I wanted very much to talk to this man, and I wanted to see his recently completed seven foot model of the battleship Missouri. A friend warned me: "Pastor, when you call on this man to see his ship model, don't tell him you are a preacher or he will probably throw you out." I finally made contact with the man and spent a most pleasant hour or so studying his ship model and the official blue-prints he had obtained from the Department of the Navy. He had never been on board a battleship, whereas I had toured a couple of them and was

able thus to explain some of the things about battleships that even he didn't know. He didn't seem to resent my being a preacher. I was interested in his hobby, so we had a good common ground. Not long afterwards this man, while working alone at an all-night gas station, was robbed and beaten almost to death with a cement block. I visited him in the hospital. I did not speak with him at length—it wasn't the time for it. I gave him brief exhortations concerning the Lord, and let him know that I and many other people were praying for him. He began to recover and I heard him praise the Almighty for it. One day I left him a copy of *Meditations* that featured the Lenten season. Later, as I passed by his hospital room, I looked in and saw him reading from it. When finally he was released from the hospital, I read an ad in the local newspaper in which he mentioned my name and that of the local Baptist preacher, thanking us for our calls. I guess that he found preachers to be not such bad fellows after all.

But I wanted to break the ice still further. I was aware that he had a long-time ambition of actually taking a ride on a naval vessel. A petty officer who had displayed one of his models at a naval training station had more or less promised him such a cruise in return for his turning the model of the battleship Missouri over to the Navy. However, this officer was transferred before his promise could be carried out. I proceeded to go to bat for this man and took the matter first to the United States Congress. In turn, connection was made with appropriate departments of the Navy. I ultimately received the assurance of a rear admiral that this man would be given a naval cruise when he recovered from his injuries. I followed a call to another state before I could see the matter through, but left it in good hands (a local newspaper editor). What of all this effort? I believe it was being "all things to all men." It was an approach that accomplished confidence in the mission prospect. It broke the ice. It helped make the prospect receptive to the gospel.

There was the case of the elderly, crippled lady living in the home of her daughter and son-in-law. She wanted to be baptized. I then gave her rudimentary instructions for baptism at her home as she and her daughter sat around the kitchen table with me. I tried to time my visits so that we were just getting a good start when the man of the house came home from work. He listened too. The elderly lady was baptized. But a seed had been sown in the household. They all desired the full instruction course. Finally, the daughter and her husband were baptized and all three were received into membership. The same year the man of the house became ill with cancer and within about six months he went home to glory.

All of you could furnish numerous examples from your own ministries, and I only wish there were time for all of us to share in them. How we need to pray to the Holy Spirit to lend us the gift of being ingenious, where this gift would be of benefit to the gospel by helping us establish a good relationship with the people we want to reach. It isn't necessarily the number of calls that we make, but what we do with them when we make them, that counts. But in all our efforts to be ingenious, let's strive to have class, to be dignified. The holy ministry deserves our very best.

In Summary

To be all things to all men in order that we might by all means save some, is a wonderful spiritual ethic—truly a gift of the Spirit—that we should, all desire and pray for, and then with the Spirit's aid, work to perfect in our ministry. The work of ministering the gospel to people is itself a divine work, a work the Holy Spirit carries on through us. Any and all spiritual gifts that qualify us to do this work come from God through the Spirit. Never should we be ashamed, then, to ask the Holy Spirit for them. St. Paul was a man of prayer and of faith; God did not let him down. God gave rich spiritual gifts to Paul. He directed Paul's ministry. He opened doors for Paul and gave Paul the wisdom, tact, ability, courage, strength, and ingenuity to enter those

doors with the gospel. All this is a part of Bible history. Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, where Paul makes it plain that the competence he and the other apostles had in the holy ministry came from God. There are other Scripture references as well.

In closing this conference paper, I would like to share some observations made by Mark A. Matthews, D.D. I believe they are timely and apropos to our subject matter:

God called men to be prophets, preachers, teachers and evangelists. The world expects the pulpit to be the mouthpiece of divine truth. The world needs doctrinal truth if it is to find Christ, accept him, and become a factor in evangelization. It is impossible for anyone to fill a pulpit unless he has mastered the truths of God's Word. The greatest place on earth is the pulpit of the evangelical church. The preaching of the gospel is the supreme service of the church and in the church. The sermon from the pulpit is to unfold in a clear, unmistakable, but convincing manner the gospel of Jesus Christ...The minister recognizes that he is subject to attack every minute. That is the program of Satan: to attack the church by crushing its ministers. Therefore the minister never carries his heart on his sleeve, nor is he supersensitive. He will be criticized. He will make mistakes. It has been well said that the man who cannot make a mistake cannot make anything. The man who cannot be criticized is one of the nobodies...The minister should be courageous, willing to endure any kind of persecution for Christ's sake. His life is at stake...Character remains unsullied and unimpeached as long as the minister stands true to the Word and to the Bible. The minister does not have to answer criticism. Christ will do the defending, the Holy Spirit will protect, and therefore the minister should never try to answer or protect himself. In Christ he is impregnable, and invincible...The minister should never be afraid of the rich, kowtow to the mighty or neglect the poor. The prince and the peasant are both his companions, and both are objects of his love. He is to be peacemaker, the arbitrator and the friend of both foe and friend. All men should feel perfectly free to come to him at any time. Every child should love him because he is lovable. He should love the children until they would be willing to be tucked away in his pocket or seek protection in his arms. This is the position of the preacher of the gospel, the shepherd of the flock, the leader of the force...Christ built the church and guaranteed it in perpetuity and power. He also guaranteed its work and opened the door for it. No man can shut the door. These are days of opportunities to preach the gospel and to proclaim victory. The missionary call and the evangelistic call are urgent. The lost condition of a pagan world requires that the Word of God be preached to the ends of the earth. (*Building the Church*, 1940 by the American Tract Society, Oradell, N.J., quoted in "The Chief Work," Decision, October 1969.)

In preaching the gospel, St. Paul was careful to use the correct methods—the right ethic—and these involved love and understanding. All this came to Paul by God's grace through the Holy Spirit. He worked at being all things to all men with the law and gospel in order that he might save some through Christ for eternity. He worked hard and ingeniously so that the gospel itself could do its work of converting souls and saving them. In the process Paul himself was saved. Preaching the gospel kept him constantly in the fellowship of the gospel which then fed his own Christian spirit so that he could finally confess: "I have kept the faith." He received the crown of everlasting life. By doing everything he could to win souls, as many as possible, he showed that he was sincere. He showed that he really did believe in the power of the gospel to save and the necessity of the gospel to be preached with all dispatch. God help us to follow in St.

Paul's footsteps, to carry out his ethic in our ministry, and in the process, to be saved by God's grace through faith. Amen.

With Thee, Lord, have I cast my lot;
O faithful God, forsake me not,
To Thee my soul commending.
Lord, be my Stay, Lead Thou the way
Now and when life is ending. Amen. (TLH, 524:6)