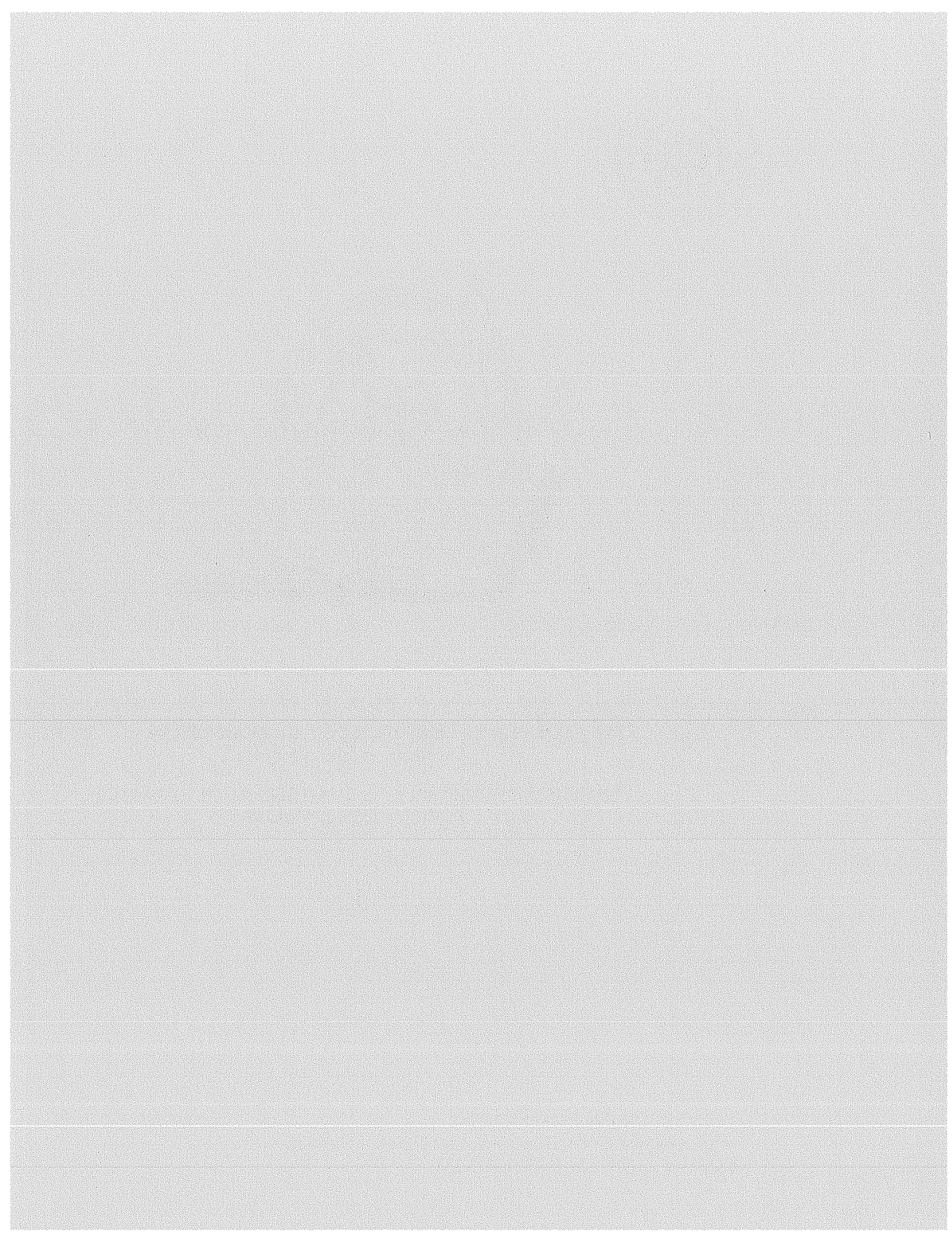


"WE BELIEVE . ." - THE THEOLOGY OF EVANGELISM
Professor Armin Schuetze

"THEREFORE WE SPEAK . ." - EVANGELISM IN PRACTICE
Professor Daniel Malchow

HANDBOOK ON EVANGELISM
WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
COMMISSION ON EVANGELISM



These essays are printed under the auspices of the Commission on Evangelism. It is our desire that they be used as a basis of discussion by pastoral conferences and by local congregations in establishing and upgrading evangelism programs.

"We Believe. . .Therefore We Speak." We are accustomed to hearing reports from home and foreign missionaries. It is easy to forget about our own home town evangelism. Here again we must say, "We Believe. . . Therefore We Speak." We thank Professor Schuetze for reminding us that we are all evangelists, messengers of the good news of Jesus Christ. We thank Professor Malchow for giving us practical suggestions for implementing such personal evangelism.

May these essays serve to bring us personal joy as by God's grace we fulfill our ministry, doing the work He has given us to do - - the work of evangelists. We believe; we must speak.

The Commission on Evangelism
Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod
L. J. Lindloff, Chairman

"WE BELIEVE" - THE THEOLOGY OF EVANGELISM

THE COMPELLING POWER OF FAITH IN EVANGELISM

"We believe and therefore speak." This theme for our 1971 Synod Convention directs our thoughts to the work of Evangelism. When our theme says, "and therefore speak," this refers not to any kind of speaking. This refers to speaking the Gospel, the Evangel. To speak the Gospel is to be a witness unto Christ (Acts 1:8), and that is what evangelism is all about.

"We believe," the first half of our theme, directs our attention to that which leads to speaking, to that which impels the speaker, to the message that must be spoken.

It is only proper that we begin with this. Unless we begin with believing, we can hope for little speaking. On the other hand, where there is believing, the speaking ought inevitably to follow. This is the relationship of the two parts of our convention theme. In this essay we direct our attention to the first two words: We believe. In doing so we present the theology of evangelism, that is, we examine the Biblical basis for our speaking.

We believe - to believe means to accept as true. But it means much more than that. It means to trust, to depend upon, to rely upon. Believing is something the mind and heart do. But it isn't just any kind of believing that leads to evangelism. We believe, that is, we believe the Gospel, we trust in Christ, we rely upon His Word and promises. In other words, what we believe is important.

In more technical doctrinal study we may speak of faith in two ways. One is to speak of faith as an activity, faith as the act of believing. The other is to speak of faith as the object of the activity, faith as that which is believed. But when we say, "We believe," we cannot separate the two. To believe without the right object is to have a husk without a kernel. To speak of faith in an object without having that be an activity of the heart is hypocrisy. When we say, "We believe," we are saying: with our whole heart we trust in the Gospel of Christ: we stake our very lives on Jesus' redemption. Faith as an activity and faith as object remain together here.

We believe and therefore speak. It is a fact that our heart controls our mouth. It is a fact that what we believe affects what we say - and do. That is a fact of everyday life. It is also Biblical. Our theme is based on II Corinthians 4:13b, where St. Paul asserts this of himself. He quotes from Psalm 116. There in verse 10 the inspired poet too had sung: "I believed, therefore have I spoken." That is the way it will ever be. This impresses on us the compelling power of faith in evangelism. Under this theme we present the theology of evangelism.

Faith is a compelling power in evangelism

- I. because of what we believe,
- II. because of the characteristics of what we believe, and
- III. because of what faith makes of us.

I. What We Believe

What do we believe? The Creed states what we believe. Luther's Small Catechism is a summary of our faith. The Book of Concord is our most complete confession of faith. These express our faith; they do so because they state what the Bible says. In reality, we believe what the Bible teaches. Let us then briefly review some chief elements of our faith, basing this on portions of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. This may be considered the Bible's most comprehensive presentation of what we believe.

The Wrath of God Against Sin

In Romans 1:18 we read: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The holy God leaves no doubt about His attitude toward unrighteousness, ungodliness, wickedness, and sin. His wrath is revealed against it all.

Paul, in the first chapter, speaks of the idolatry, the immorality, the depraved perversions of his day. Behind it all is man's failure to acknowledge God as God. It is not that man is completely ignorant of God and His judgment on wickedness. Rather, the men he describes are such who, "knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). This pictures the utter depravity of men who, while recognizing the judgment of God against evil, yet find pleasure in and even approve of it with a kind of diabolical delight.

Indeed, how wicked the world is! Also our world, with its perversions, homosexuality, X-movies, violence, drug addiction, abortions, etc., etc. Not only does wickedness abound. We also can hear flagrant defense of it all under the claim of human freedom. Man continues to exchange the truth of God for a lie and worships and serves the creature more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). That is the world in which we live. Even the approval of wickedness abounds.

But, we may say, thank God that you and I know that the wrath of God is revealed against all this ungodliness. We know, God will not be mocked. He will come in judgment. We know this -- and sometimes feel very comfortable with this knowledge, for this applies to the wicked world out there. We may say to ourselves: But I don't engage in violence; I'm not a drug addict or even a drunkard; I don't go to X-movies; I love my wife; and I'm honest in my business. How comfortable to know that the wrath of God is revealed against the wicked world out there!

We feel comfortable until Paul asks the question: "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2:3). Do we think we shall escape the wrath of God because we are incensed over the evil in the world? Do we think that we are not guilty too? Paul says: You do the same; you are just as guilty as the world you judge. He asks: "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" (Rom. 2:21f). This is Paul's final conclusion: "Are we better than they? No, in no way; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:9, 23). No, I cannot point only at the wicked world out there. The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of man, also mine.

This is what I know and believe about man, about all men, about myself: All have sinned. I must confess: I am a lost and condemned creature. Paul leaves no sinner comfortable in his sin. What he teaches us about man's sin and the righteous God's judgment of sin allows for no complacency. The wrath of God against ungodliness and sin is terrifying. It is terrifying because I too am unrighteous. And the wages of sin is death, that means hell.

Redemption through Christ by Grace

Terrified at God's wrath against sin, our sin, we listen as Paul goes on: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 2:24, 25). As soon as we hear the words "redemption" and "propitiation" and "blood," we are reminded how our Savior said that "the Son of man came...to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). We can see John the Baptist pointing to Christ and hear him saying: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We are reminded of Isaiah prophesying: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; ...the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all" (Isa. 53:5, 6). All of this reminds us of the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became also the Son of man, our brother, took man's sin on Himself, experienced the full wrath of God against sin when He as our ransom gave Himself a sacrifice for sin. Thus, once for all, Christ Jesus through the shedding of His blood has paid the penalty for sin, has turned away the wrath of God from man to whom sin is no longer imputed. Man is justified, declared just, innocent, free from the guilt of sin.

This happens freely by His grace. This means that man made no contribution that merited such action on the part of God. The grace of God alone moved Him to effect this amazing change. This fact, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, is the very center of what we believe.

Through Faith

Paul also points out that this justification is ours by faith. By way of example he uses the illustration of Abraham. The faith of Abraham was not a work Abraham performed. It was Abraham taking God at His Word. Faith is accepting God's promise at face value, depending, relying on it, "being persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). Thus through faith in the blood of Christ man accepts the redemption as his own, being fully persuaded that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, has indeed cleansed him of all unrighteousness.

Peace

And what is the result for man? "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). The wrath of God revealed against sin left man no peace. That all has, however, changed through Christ. We now have peace with God. His wrath has been turned from us. What love is this! "God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8, 9). With Paul we say: "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom. 5:11). Yes, what a change for us, from the wrath of God to peace with God - through Christ. This is what we believe.

Servants of Righteousness

But will not such free salvation make man careless about sin? Paul asks the question: "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace?" (Rom. 6:15). "God forbid," is his answer. Paul wants us to know that "to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16). We must not forget that by baptism we died with Christ. Now like Christ we should rise unto a newness of life (Rom. 6:4). When we were made free from sin, we became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). Indeed, through Christ's death we have died unto sin, with Him we are to rise unto newness of life, a life in which we now are servants to righteousness, unto holiness (Rom. 6:19).

Such a new life will call for a struggle in us, a hard battle. We see this happening in ourselves that to will the good is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. We now delight in the law of God after the inward man; but we see another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin that is in our members (Rom. 7:18, 22, 23). Indeed, the life of service to God is not an easy one. Again and again we fail, and we cry out: "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:25). By faith we know the answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom. 7:25). Yes, for a truly blessed life of service to God we must look to Jesus, our Savior. Only as we are joined to Him by faith can we have a life in which sin is renounced, a life in which God is served.

Eternal Glory

Though we have peace with God through Christ, though we are victors with Christ, the Christian's life in this world of sin will not always be peaceful and pleasant. Tribulations and trials, sufferings and sorrows can be expected. But when life seems rough, we can say with Paul: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). By faith "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). Yes, whatever difficult times still confront us in a troubled world, glory awaits us in the future, a wondrous glory we cannot now comprehend. This creation of God, corrupted by man's sin, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Though we now have the Spirit of God as a first fruit, a pledge of future glory, "we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). How wonderful when our bodies shall be changed and be like Jesus' glorious body! Truly a wonderful redemption, a glorious salvation lies before us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All This We Believe

All this in no way exhausts what we believe. We have picked up only some choice nuggets from the gold mine of Scripture. Paul's Letter to the Romans is a vein in this mine that promises rich returns to him who digs deeply into it. But choice nuggets these are that we have mined, enriching us beyond measure with the priceless treasure, Jesus Christ, with whom there is peace, hope, life, eternal glory.

What we believe can most simply be stated with the one word, Gospel. Yes, what we believe is indeed gospel, that is, a good spell or message, good tidings. This is a literal translation of the word used in Greek, εὐαγγέλιον, good news. So it is. It is a message that concerns itself

with man's most significant and persistent problems, sin and death. In the face of sin and its judgment we believe in redemption, forgiveness through Jesus. In the face of death we believe in life and eternal glory with Christ. That is indeed an evangel, a gospel, good tidings. If we had to believe that death must end only in judgment unto damnation and hell, such a faith would compel avoiding the subject, denying its truth. Who would want to speak about such a terrifying eventuality, such a fearsome certainty. Better to deny its very possibility. If we had to believe that death ended it all, such a faith would lead to a reluctant speaking of facts that are at best unpleasant and disturbing. But we believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a gospel of hope, peace, life, salvation. What a compelling power such a faith must be to evangelize, to speak forth this good news!

Indeed, because of what we believe our faith is a compelling power in evangelism.

II. The Characteristics of What We Believe

The power of our Christian faith, impelling us to testify of Christ, is evident also when we consider some of the characteristics of what we believe. We shall consider four that are particularly significant in this connection: the universality as well as the uniqueness of the Gospel, its power to work faith and its divine origin.

Universal

What we believe is universally true and applicable. For that reason it must be universally proclaimed.

All have sinned. All? That is what Scripture says. That is what we believe. All - that includes my mother and father, my son and daughter, my husband or wife, my co-worker and my fiance, my neighbor and my closest friend, as well as that casual acquaintance. That includes every person in the swarm of cars that rushes down the freeway. That includes each of those thousands I see in a crowded stadium, or on a busy street. Yes, all have sinned. That is a universal fact.

The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. All - again! Not only against murder, but also against hate; not only against theft, but also against covetousness; not only against adultery, but also against lust; against all unrighteousness. How guilty before God this makes all men!

And death and judgment - because of sin, judgment unto damnation - face all men. Benjamin Franklin once said: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." But of the two, death is the more certain. Scripture says: "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Sin, death, judgment, hell - that is the story of all men. With all their differences, how much men are all alike! The way to hell is a broad one. Men don't have to look for it. They are on it - all.

But all of this in a way is only preliminary. God uses the word "all" not only in speaking of His wrath against sin. We turn to what in the face of these universal facts we nevertheless can and do believe. Here, too, God speaks in universal terms. God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). The Lord "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). Jesus Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but

also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). God in Christ reconciled the world unto himself (II Cor. 5:19). Jesus takes away with His sacrifice the sins of the world (John 1:29). All men, the whole world - these are the expressions our God uses also here when speaking of those for whom Christ won eternal redemption. The human problem is universal, but so is the divine solution. The thieving publican, the adulterous woman, the despairing jailor, the crucified murderer, each of them could know that Jesus came to seek and save him. The Ethiopian eunuch, the Greek philosopher, the Roman centurion, they too were redeemed through the blood of Christ. Your neighbor may not know it, but also his sins were removed through the sacrifice of Jesus. Your sick friend too can be assured that Christ has opened the way to an eternal life for him. The fact is, whenever you look at another human being, whether he be black or white, old or young, rich or poor, shaved or bearded, you see another one of those "all" for whose sins Jesus died. We believe in a redemption that embraces all men in its saving purpose. This is true not merely as a possibility that can become a reality under certain conditions. This is true as an accomplished fact of history. Jesus Christ died, and when He did, it was for the sins of all men.

Then all men have the right to hear of it. Dare I hoard for myself the treasure that is meant as much for my neighbor as for me? A treasure he needs just as much as I do?

Unique

Universal redemption - does this mean that there is also universal salvation? Reason wants to draw that conclusion, but Scripture does not. Scripture claims exclusiveness and uniqueness for the Gospel it proclaims. "Neither is there salvation in any other," said Peter of the crucified and risen Jesus; "for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus called Himself "the way" and asserted: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). One mediator, and only one, between God and man is recognized by Paul in writing to Timothy (I Tim. 2:5). What does this mean? It means, and that without equivocation, that there will not be one person in heaven who has bypassed Christ. It means that it is a lie to say that there are many ways all of which lead to heaven. Who has not heard that said? With equal logic one might say that any liquid will quench the thirst of man. Whoever laps up the ocean's salty waves soon proves the error of that statement. Whoever would drink hemlock with Socrates would find, not his thirst quenched, but his life snuffed out. All roads lead to heaven? Whoever follows another way than Christ will testify in hell that this is a damnable lie because it is a lie that damns. No other name but that of Jesus. No other way but Christ. No mediator but one. That is Scripture's claim. That is the truth. The way of salvation is an exclusive one, unique. Men need to be directed to it. It is a matter of life and death.

In contrast to the broad way that leads to hell, Jesus tells us that the way to life is a narrow, a confined or restricted, one (Matt. 7:14). That is another way of stressing its uniqueness. And the result is that many follow the broad way; few, however, find the narrow one. The universality of the atonement indeed gives all men the right to be on this narrow way. But its uniqueness results in the vast majority never finding it. How important for those who know this way to direct people, all people, to it. There is no other.

But how? What determines the road I'm on? He that believeth not shall be damned. That is Scripture's description of the multitudes on the broad way. They are damned because they do not believe in the atonement Jesus gained for

them. But how do we find the narrow way? When are we on it? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus' redemptive work puts us on it.

Powerful

This brings us to another characteristic of the Gospel significant for evangelism. The Gospel is powerful; it creates faith.

St. Paul writes: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Gospel is like rain, Isaiah tells us. It effects growth, it "watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud. . .so shall my Word be. . .it shall accomplish that which I please" (Isa. 55:10, 11). St. John recorded the Gospel; he wrote what Jesus had done "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). Words persuade. Words convince. By means of words we get people to believe what we say. However, this is true of the Gospel in a special way. God's Word persuades in a way human words cannot. Jesus says this when He claims for the Words which He spoke: "They are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). There is power working through the Gospel that is not true of any human word. This is the life-giving power of the Spirit. St. Paul points this difference out. He tells the Corinthians: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. 2:4). In his preaching Paul did not persuade his hearers, the way men seek to persuade, with words that captivate and convince. Another power was working as he spoke the Word of God. That was the Holy Spirit.

"No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." No human word, no persuasion of man will lead to faith in the redemption of Christ. The Holy Spirit must work that faith. He does through the Gospel. That is why St. Paul calls the Gospel the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16). Shall we fail to use it? Shall we confine this power under a bushel?

Divine

Finally, what we believe was divinely revealed. It is not of man, but of God. It had to be, or we wouldn't have it.

Why not? Because the things that God prepared for them that love him are not known to man by nature. The eye of man does not discern them, nor are they heard among men, nor found in their hearts and minds (I Cor. 2:9). "Natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them" (I Cor. 2:14). In the Gospel we have that which is above and beyond human discovery, invention, or contriving.

How did we get this Gospel that was beyond human discovery? God has revealed it to us by His Spirit, St. Paul assures us (I Cor. 2:10).

This happened already in the Old Testament when God revealed what He would do for man's salvation. In those days of old God at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke to the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1). Those holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet. 1:21). They wrote what God revealed so that Paul confidently asserted: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16).

God continued His revelation. God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:2). This is the one of whom the Old Testament Scriptures testified (John 5:39). This is the one who could say, "He that hath

seen me hath seen the Father. . . The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself" (John 14:9, 10). The disciples recognized that God was speaking to them in Jesus. Peter in behalf of all said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Jesus no longer speaks to us in the manner He spoke to the disciples. But He still speaks to us. What He did and what He said is still revealed. Of the things freely given to us of God St. Paul says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (I Cor. 2:13). Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians, when they heard his preaching - and we can add, when they read his writings - received it, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13). The New Testament continues God's revelation to us. The apostles and evangelists wrote what God wanted recorded with the words the Holy Spirit gave them to use. The Holy Scriptures, the Gospel they reveal to us, are of divine origin.

When we believe the Gospel that was given to us in the Holy Scriptures, then what we believe is that which came to us by divine revelation. What we believe is of God. When we speak what we believe, Jesus' promise is true also of us: "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke 10:16). When we speak the Gospel, God is using our lips to speak His revelation. What a responsibility! What a privilege! If we believe that, can our lips be sealed? Shall our tongues be silent? Shall not the very housetops become pulpits from which to shout this Gospel into all the world?

Let each of us remember the characteristics of the Gospel we believe. What we believe is universal. It was prepared for all. I dare withhold from none what rightfully is his. The Gospel is unique. There is no other way to life. I cannot silently stand by as men in droves go down the broad way to eternal death. The Gospel is a word of power. I must speak forth that Word to loose its power to work in hearts that hear. The Gospel is divine. It is God speaking to the ignorance of man. My lips must speak it forth to serve as mouthpiece of our God.

Indeed, because of the characteristics of what we believe our faith is a compelling power in evangelism.

III. What Faith Makes of Us

Faith compels us to speak. Faith compels us because of what faith makes of us.

Who am I? Our confession is: I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Faith in the triune God gives us our identity. Who am I? Whoever has no answer to that question finds his life to be aimless, without purpose. What purpose does our faith give to our life? This really is our question: What does God tell me about myself as a believer? Who does He say I am? What does He say is the purpose of my life? Listen to what Scripture tells you about yourself as one who believes in the triune God.

Children of the Father

You say: I believe. Know, then, that the Heavenly Father claims you as His child. John writes: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). Again he writes: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"

(I John 5:1). St. Paul writes: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). Sin forced us to say like the prodigal son: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son!" But for Jesus' sake the Father calls out to us: "My son. You were dead, but you are alive again." And He slays for us the fatted calf, preparing for us the feast of heaven. As children of God we are declared heirs, heirs of God through Christ (Gal. 4:7). Just what is all involved in being God's children we cannot now fully see and understand. John writes: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be" (I John 3:2).

What a transformation has occurred through faith: from lost creatures, condemned eternally, to children of God, heirs of heaven, eternally. You have the full right to call the Almighty God of heaven and earth Abba, Father. Don't let the wonder of it be lost. God the Father calls you His child. You call Him Father. Marvel and rejoice!

But don't stop with that. He who was God's Son, begotten from eternity, said while here on earth: "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). Can you and I, adopted children, say any less? The Father's children we are by faith. Our Father's business ever must remain our prime concern.

Branches in Christ

You say: I believe. Listen to the intimate relationship the Lord Jesus claims for you by faith. He uses a picture from nature. "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5). How close is the connection between a vine and branches. A branch is not merely tied or nailed or glued to the vine. It abides in the vine, and in such a way that from the vine vital power and fruit-bearing energy surges into the branch. Cut off from the vine, the branch is dead wood.

This connection to the vine also gives purpose to the branch's existence. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Yes, by faith you are called a branch in Jesus, the vine. You live and bear fruit through power from Him. This fruit results not simply from a command of your Savior. The fruit must be there because of what you are, a living branch, vitalized, energized, empowered by Christ the vine. Consider who you are, a branch in Christ the vine. Marvel and rejoice! And bear fruit!

Temples of the Holy Ghost

You say: I believe. As such the Holy Ghost makes you something very special. Who are you? Paul addresses these words to you who believe: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19, 20). To the Ephesians Paul writes of "the Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). The Holy Spirit has taken over in you; He has made your body His abode. You don't belong to yourself. Even your body isn't yours. God has paid a price for you. His claim on you is evident by the Holy Spirit's indwelling in your body. That is who you are by faith in Jesus Christ.

This has practical consequences. Scripture points them out. Paul warned the Corinthians: Don't use your bodies in the interest of sin; flee fornication; don't be joined to an harlot. Rather they are told: "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:20). To the Ephesians this thought is carried out in greater detail (Eph. 4:25-32). Christians should

not grieve the Spirit by which they were sealed, that indwelling Spirit. Paul warns them against lying, stealing, filthy talk, bitterness, wrath, and anger, against placing any member of their body into the service of sin. The Christian, body and soul, belongs to God. And so, whatever he does with his eyes, his ears, his lips and tongue, his hands and feet, his intellect, indeed, every part of him, should not fail to take into account that the Holy Ghost has taken over. Remember, you are temples of the Holy Ghost. Don't grieve Him! Don't drive Him out again!

Priests of a King

Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? Peter sums it up for you: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9, NASB). You have an identity that makes you something special in this world. You are a chosen one of God, claimed by Him as His very dear possession, made holy by Him through Christ; you are the priest of a King. Treasure this priesthood that identifies you together with all your fellow Christians.

And what as the King's priest is your life's purpose? You must proclaim the excellencies of your God. You must tell forth what He has done in leading you from the darkness of sin and death to the light of the Gospel, to the light of life in heaven. Thus you are about your Father's business. Thus you bear fruit as a vine in Christ. Thus the Spirit finds your body a welcome temple to inhabit.

Indeed, our faith is a compelling power in evangelism because of what it makes of us.

Conclusion

"We believe and therefore speak." This convention theme makes an assertion. But it is also an occasion for selfexamination. We have a faith whose content and characteristics compel speaking. We have a faith that makes us such who must speak. Now each of us must ask himself: Do I? Do I as the King's priest tell forth the wonderful deeds of Him who called me from darkness to light? Do I speak to the sinner I meet about my Savior and his? Has faith compelled me to speak?

It can be enlightening to see ourselves as others see us. An observer coming from without may reflect our true selves back to us in a way that a biased selfinspection fails to do. During this past year God sent a missionary from distant India to us to spend some time in the midst of our Synod. He, together with his faithful Christian wife, came to us, for they believed that the content of our faith, what we believe, was true to the Scriptures. And that is what they found, a church that held to the inspired Scriptures as do they, a church whose faith agreed with theirs, for both, they and we, had found this truth in Scripture. And yet, as they observed our church, this question fell from his lips: "Are your people really Christian?" What raised that question in his mind when he could see the correctness of what we believe? "I never hear them talk about Christ," he said.

Never? Perhaps we bristle at this obvious exaggeration. Never? We pastors may point to our sermons, our instruction and Bible classes, to the words we speak at the bedside of the sick, and to our visits on the unchurched. Never? Our teachers may correctly point to the many children that have heard

them tell of Jesus. Never? Our people may direct attention to our evangelism committees, to canvass teams, to the young people who again this summer are making calls, teaching classes, telling about Jesus in our crowded cities. Never? It's an obvious exaggeration. And it was hardly meant in an absolute sense.

And yet, it lets us see ourselves as others see us. Never? It does force each to ask himself: When did I last confront a sinner with my Savior? Never? Is it perhaps true that we do talk more freely about politics and weather, about sports and cars and jobs than we do about Christ? Never? Is it perhaps true that we think we speak about Christ more than we actually do? Never? By now our conscience may be saying: I must admit this to be true in my life more than I care to confess. Is it true that for many our motto should in fact read: We believe and yet fail to speak?

To the extent that it is true that we do not speak about Jesus, to that extent the question can be asked: Are we really Christian? We must indeed guard against the judging of hearts. But to raise the question is not to pass judgment. Besides, our Savior said: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). Luther's German translation is more picturesque: Wes das Herz voll ist, des gehet der Mund ueber. (Literally: The mouth spills over with what fills the heart.) We are reminded of a cup filled to overflowing. Whatever so completely fills it is also what will pour forth from it. And because it is so full, it must run over. The Gospel that has truly filled the Christian's heart must spill out from his lips. If it doesn't, one rightly wonders how full his heart is. And so the absence of "Jesus-talk" raises the question of how full our hearts are with the Jesus-Gospel. That is what is meant by a question like: Are your people really Christian? Do they really have Jesus in their hearts? Does He and His Gospel really fill their hearts to overflowing? God has preserved to us the content of our faith, preserved it true to Scripture. But does it also grip our hearts? Does it so abundantly fill our hearts so that from this abundance our mouth must speak?

Or are we full in another sense? Are we full to the point of satiety? Are we full like the man who has repeatedly indulged in his favorite food? He has lost his interest in food. He has grown lazy. He is full and fat and flabby. Have we had the Gospel so fully for so long that we are full, satiated? Has it lost its wonder for us? Has its importance faded because we have never been without it? Has the fullness of God's grace to us made us spiritually full and fat and flabby? We pray God this may not be so.

All of this is, of course, an individual matter. It pertains to your heart and mine. We so easily generalize, and so are tempted to speak of the Synod as a whole. We believe that the Gospel is still powerful in the hearts of men, one by one. We believe that it does still grip hearts, one here, one there, as God gives grace.

Fellow believers! What we believe is what the world needs. What we believe is universally true and unique, powerful and divine. Our faith makes us children of God, branches in Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, priests of the King. May all of this so fill our hearts to overflowing that we must pour forth the faith that has gripped our hearts. May each of us have a heart taken captive by Christ, by His Gospel, so that we may, as living examples of it, unite in our theme: We believe and therefore speak.

"THEREFORE WE SPEAK" - EVANGELISM IN PRACTICE

Introduction

At times one sees in the office of a pastor a rather humorous description of his vocation. In answer to the question, "What does a pastor do?" the anonymous humorist responds, "The pastor teaches, though he must solicit his own classes. He heals, though without pills or knife. He is sometimes a lawyer, often a social worker, something of an editor, a bit of a philosopher and entertainer; a salesman; a decorative piece for public functions; and he is supposed to be a scholar. He visits the sick, marries people, buries the dead, labors to console those who sorrow and to admonish those who sin, and tries to stay sweet when chided for not doing his duty. He plans programs, appoints committees when he can get them; spends considerable time in keeping people out of each other's hair; between times he prepares a sermon and preaches it on Sunday to those who don't happen to have any other engagement. Then on Monday he smiles when some jovial chap roars, what a job - one day a week!"

As has been stated, this so-called "job description" is intended to be humorous. Actually Christians endeavor to treat the office of the holy ministry with the lofty dignity and respect it deserves. This office is a most precious gift which God has given to His Church. We treasure the rich blessings, blessings of eternal consequence, which our Heavenly Father has showered upon us, His children, through the office of the holy ministry.

The Pastor's Dilemma

At the same time, as is so often true of humor, we see a "kernel of truth" in the aforementioned description of the pastor's office. We are aware of pastors burdened with an almost endless detail of duties. We sense discouragements and frustrations they encounter in trying to carry out faithfully and conscientiously the varied, almost countless, responsibilities of their office. We recognize that the complexity of duties which confront the pastor is a compelling problem which cries for attention and assistance.

One ministerial responsibility which gives rise to repeated frustration is the pastor's desire to reach the unchurched people of his community or his immediate neighborhood. As Paul exhorted Timothy, the pastor is to "do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5). For those in his neighborhood who are lost in sin, entangled in the clutches of Satan, grasping for peace of mind and soul, urgently in need of God's precious love and mercy proclaimed in the Gospel, the pastor has the "pearl of great price." But how does the pastor uncover or find such lost sheep? How can he reach them?

Every Christian is a Witness

There is an answer, at least in part, to this problem. It is to this answer that we want to direct our thoughtful attention. Doing "the work of an evangelist" is a God-given responsibility that concerns more individuals than just the pastor. It is a God-given directive to every child of God. Every Christian is a daily witness to the Gospel of peace and to the living faith which the Holy Spirit has worked in his heart. When Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth in his second epistle, "We also believe and therefore speak," he was referring to a characteristic or a quality that is inherent in every sanctified child of God.

How does the Christian carry out this vital responsibility of functioning as an evangelist? How does he do so with the greatest possible effectiveness? How does the Christian congregation aid its members in their desire to function as faithful witnesses to God's message of grace? What are some of the significant factors which are important in establishing and carrying out a practical evangelism ministry? These are questions which emerge as we further consider the words of the apostle Paul, "WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE SPEAK." Our attention is thus directed to the topic:

THEREFORE WE SPEAK - EVANGELISM IN PRACTICE

As we consider evangelism in practice, we wish to point to three things which would suggest themselves as having prime importance in putting evangelism into practice. They are:

- I. Preparation.
- II. Program.
- III. Passion.

I. Preparation

It is recognized that in almost all endeavors of life there is a need for preparation. This is why we send young people to school. It is why skilled workers begin at the bottom rung on the ladder instead of at the top. It accounts for in-service training which is becoming ever more common in business and industry. No matter how easy or simple the task, under ordinary circumstances there is great profit in preparation.

A. A Carefully Prepared Study of the Scriptures

What type of preparation is needed for the work of evangelism? Basically this preparation consists in a carefully prepared study of the Scriptures. If the Christian is to witness to his faith, he will need to have and will want to have a thorough knowledge of the precious truths to which he is witnessing.

An Invaluable Tool

How important is such a sound knowledge of the Scriptures when speaking with people who are unchurched? If the question is raised, "Why do many people not accept the free offer of God's love and promise of salvation?" we quickly become aware of the numerous barriers which Satan has established to prevent a fruitful reception of the Gospel message. There are those who despise the Christian message because there is much of it which they do not understand or which they misunderstand. The fanaticism of the many religious sects has created a situation where people are bombarded on all sides by almost countless distortions of the Truth. Added to this is the fact that with alarming frequency people have personal problems or family problems which deter them from seeking refuge in their God. In a family where the husband and father is vehemently anti-Christian, the mother and children will be cautious if not even fearful about identifying themselves with the Christian faith. Our loving God has answers for those who suffer from a lack of understanding of His message, from a misconception of His truth, or from personal problems, but the tragedy is that these unfortunate individuals do not know these answers. The Christian witness should. The Christian witness should, as Peter says,

"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15).

Extensive Theological Training Not Necessary

This does not mean that extensive training in theology is necessary for Christian witnessing. It is not necessary that the Christian have superior intelligence or such an extensive knowledge of Scripture that he can answer every objection which people may raise or every problem which they may unfold. Eloquence or scholarship does not save. Only a faithful presentation of God's saving message has that power. It matters not whether this message comes from the lips of a university professor or from a person with only an elementary school education. St. Paul made a special point of saying to the Corinthians, "I came not with excellency of speech" (I Cor. 2:1). Should you be harboring misgivings about your intellectual ability to function as a witness to the Gospel, remember what has frequently been said about evangelism, that "no one has ever been argued into the kingdom of heaven."

To be sure, the need to defend the validity of our faith by means of intelligent argument is not to be regarded as something which has no place in the church. Most of the confessional documents of our church came into existence because false teachings had to be refuted. There is need to show critics of the Christian faith who pride themselves on their intellectual approach to religious truth that they can be refuted on their own terms. But as the Rev. Paul Madson stated in a recent article in the LUTHERAN SENTINEL: "As for producing the conviction of faith, that is not accomplished through an appeal to the intellect but only through an appeal to the heart. The natural intellect can know (intellectually perceive) what the Bible says, but to believe what it says is a supernatural work produced by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the heart." This appeal to the heart can be made by every Christian, regardless of his schooling or degree of intelligence.

At the same time the Christian who seeks to put on the full armor of God will assuredly want to arm himself to the extent that God makes it possible. As God has given us His gifts, so we want to utilize these gifts to their fullest potential. We have the Savior's encouragement to "search the Scriptures." This searching serves to edify us in our faith, and it enables us to spread this message with greater clarity and effectiveness, as God grants His blessing. This is preparation, preparation for putting evangelism into practice which is vital for a practical evangelism ministry.

A Basic Function in the Christian's Life

Such preparation serves another purpose. A searching of the Scriptures serves to impress upon the child of God that witnessing is an important and basic function in his life as a Christian. The plain, simple truth is that every Christian is a witness. It is not a question whether or not you want to be a witness. You are one. The question of importance, however, is the kind of witness you choose to be.

For one thing, you are a witness to your Christian faith in the type of life you lead. A careful study of the Scriptures reveals the kind of life which God desires of His children. The conduct and behavior you display testify to the faith that abides in your heart. Nor should this form of witnessing be lightly regarded. The apostle Peter writes in his first epistle, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your

good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I Pet. 2:11, 12). Very familiar to us are our Lord's words frequently quoted from His Sermon on the Mount, "Ye are the salt of the earth. . .Ye are the light of the world. . .Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16). In your conduct as a Christian, whether that conduct is good or bad, you are functioning as a witness to your faith. It is to be deplored, of course, when evil conduct functions as a hindrance to the Gospel message.

As important as such conduct is, however, it cannot replace personal testimony. If the Gospel is to take root in a person's heart, there must be a proclamation of the Word. It is only the Gospel in Word and Sacrament which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). This Word is to emanate from the lips of every sanctified child of God. Only this proclaiming of the Word can bring lost sinners to repentance.

B. An Acquaintance with Methods

Another important aspect of preparation is acquaintance with methods or procedures to be used in reaching the unchurched. At this point we shrink from words like "techniques" or "salesmanship." Words such as these suggest "tricks of the trade" employed by some door-to-door salesmen who peddle their wares to the public. They suggest devious or cunning devices used to unload merchandise which customers do not really want. The Word of our God warns against such devices when Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians, "(We) have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully" (II Cor. 3:2).

Methods are Used in the Church's Work

Yet, the use of methods or procedures in witnessing to the Truth is hardly out of place in the work of the Church. Seminary students receive a considerable amount of training in the art of preparing and delivering a sermon. They become familiar with methods and styles to aid them in their pulpit work. Students preparing to serve as teachers in our Christian day school enroll in courses which are aptly designated as courses in methods. Again, the purpose of such courses is to enable these teachers to communicate the message of the Scriptures as effectively as possible. The same is true of our Sunday school teachers. The new Sunday school course of our Synod has been set up in such a way to enable the teacher to present these lessons in a well-organized way. There is a distinct pattern which the teacher is encouraged to follow. Our vacation Bible school courses also follow such a pattern. A salient example would be the one most recently published, which is intended primarily for unchurched children.

Similar methods or procedures are also important in personal witnessing. What the Christian wants to avoid is anything that would hinder this testimony of his faith. Here we may think of our work in foreign mission fields. At times we have learned to our dismay that the message of salvation was hindered because our missionaries unknowingly followed customs which were offensive to the native population. The purpose of acquainting ourselves with evangelism methods is primarily to avoid anything which would hamper or even block our efforts to reach the lost soul.

C. The Pastor's Role in Preparation

Finally, in considering the importance of preparation for evangelism, one dare not overlook the vital responsibility of the pastor for guidance and instruction. It is he who has been called as the spiritual shepherd of the flock. He has received the theological training to strengthen and deepen the spiritual knowledge of his congregation. Paul writes that among God's gifts to the Church are pastors and teachers. And he adds that these gifts are given for the "perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:12). A better translation for "perfecting" would be "equipping." In addition to proclaiming the glorious news of salvation, pastors are to equip their people for service in the church. Assuredly this includes the Christian's function as a witness. One is even led to wonder whether pastors at times do not wound consciences when they repeatedly exhort their parishoners to function as witnesses of their faith but then provide no preparation for such a formidable challenge. What, for example, would we think of a basketball coach who would continually lecture his players on playing better basketball but would never give them any training, never conduct any practices, or never organize a team? Nor is there any lack of material for the pastor in pursuing this work of preparation. Our Synod's Commission on Evangelism has prepared a helpful booklet, "Study to be Witnesses unto Me." The booklet is well suited for this purpose. Efficient, faithful leadership on the part of the pastor is absolutely vital in the work of preparation for a practical evangelism ministry.

II. Program

The second important aspect of "evangelism in practice" is a program. We shall at once be very explicit. With this word "program" we are referring to organization. We are speaking of an organized evangelism program.

A. A Striving for Orderliness

To some this word "organization" or "program" may sound a bit distasteful. To such as may feel that congregational life is already overly organized, suggesting another organization or another organized activity may seem reprehensible. At this point, however, the observation may well be in place, that where there is no organization, there is often disorganization. Where there is no orderliness, there is often disorderliness. In this area of Christian endeavor we feel the oft-repeated words of Scripture are once more appropriate, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

To Christians the Lord of the Church has given the weighty but glorious responsibility of spreading the blessed news of redemption. As with any other sacred responsibility we would hardly conceive of doing this in a careless or haphazard way. It is surely our desire to carry out this divine commission as efficiently and effectively as possible. And this requires forethought and planning. It needs organization. This is why Christian congregations organize as a Synod - to promote efficiency in carrying on the Lord's work. This is why we set up a well-defined and well-organized program of training for our pastors and teachers. It is why we have home mission boards and world mission boards. We want to put to the best possible and most effective use the resources which the Lord has made available to us. So it is with a congregation which wants to be faithful in reaching the unchurched people in its community. The congregation that wants to do this as effectively as possible will seemerit in having a program.

Seeking the Unchurched Who are Unknown

To avoid any misunderstanding, let it be plainly stated that one does not need a program to do the work of evangelism as such. As stated earlier, every child of God in his sanctified Christian life functions as a witness. In his everyday contacts with people he has the opportunity and the responsibility of giving testimony to his Christian faith by his conduct and his conversation. But what is to be said about the people with whom we have no normal contact? What concentrated efforts are we making to reach the lost souls in our neighborhood, those lost souls which our Savior loves so dearly that for them He shed His precious blood? What are we doing about those in our area or in our community who are living in the vise grip of Satan and who, without a knowledge of their Savior from death, are plunging into the frightful abyss of hell? This is where planning, organization, and a program enter into the picture.

B. The Soul Responsibility List

One of the first steps in a congregations's evangelism program is compiling what is referred to as a soul responsibility list or a prospective member file. Basically this is a gathering of names. The names of people who have no active church affiliation are recorded and filed. To some this may sound unnecessary. Particularly in smaller communities or rural areas the sentiment is oftentimes expressed that the church affiliation of all people in the area is commonly known, indicating that such a file of names would be useless. While certainly allowing for unusual situations, the truth is that this often is a sorry fallacy. Many are the small congregations which have been amazed at the number of unchurched families which have been uncovered after efforts were undertaken to set up a prospective member file.

The sources one can use to prepare such a file are numerous. In this presentation we shall mention just a few.

1. The guest register. Asking visitors at a church service to sign the guest book is common practice in most of our churches. Information gained from such a register usually includes not only the names of guests but also their religious affiliation, if they have one.

2. A community canvas. A religious survey or canvas is frequently helpful in acquiring names. Statistics reveal that every year one out of every five families in our country changes its residence. Because of this population mobility it is felt by some that most communities should be canvassed every two or three years.

3. The Welcome Wagon. Many cities have some type of community service which makes contact with new residents. In almost all cases these agencies are willing to supply churches with the religious information they obtain.

4. The utility companies. In communities where there is no Welcome Wagon, the gas or electric company will frequently provide the names of newcomers who have moved into the area.

5. Children in the Sunday school or vacation Bible school. Very often these children come from families that are unchurched and thereby exist as mission potential.

6. Hospital visits. Many hospitals have at the information desk a clergy

file in which patients are grouped according to their church affiliation. Often the word "Protestant" simply appears, which usually means that the patient is unchurched. On occasion no religious preference is listed at all.

7. The congregation's members. This last resource is often the most important and productive of all. In a congregation which I served it was customary to hand out cards periodically to all of the Sunday worshippers, asking them to list the names of unchurched people with whom they were acquainted or of whom they knew. Closely related to this is the adult membership class. Such people frequently have unchurched friends, and their new-found joys in Christ prompt them to respond readily when asked for the names of prospects.

So one could go on. Many other sources could be cited. We have merely endeavored to illustrate that the sources for building up a prospective member file are numerous, and they are available.

Some congregations have worked out unique systems for arranging this file. In my former congregation different colored tabs were used for the cards that made up this file. Prospects were divided into three categories: excellent, good, and fair. Before a new adult membership class was about to begin, every effort was made to visit these prospects. Those listed as "excellent" would naturally receive prime consideration.

C. The Visitation

The next part of an evangelism program involves the visitation. The prospective member file may be ever so complete or well organized, but it will avail nothing unless these people are visited. Thus the next step in a congregational evangelism program is to enlist and to train a team of visitors, visitors who are to witness.

The Witness who Visits

To some this may at first sound contradictory. Earlier it was stated that every Christian is a witness to his faith. Now we hear it said that there should be a team of witnesses. There is no contradiction involved. Here we are speaking about reaching the unchurched people of the community. Who should make these contacts? Quite obviously we would like to have these visits made by members of our congregations who are most suitably gifted or qualified for this work. Our omniscient God has distributed gifts in various ways and measures among His children. Some have talents for keeping the property of a congregation in good repair. Others are gifted for teaching little children. Still others have been blessed with voices which are put to holy use in a congregational choir. In like manner some Christians are more gifted than others in contacting the unchurched people of a community. This does not necessarily mean that they are the most intelligent. A friendly disposition, an even temperament, an amiable personality - all these are gifts of God. They can be precious attributes for one functioning as a witness for the Lord's Church.

The Visitor's Training

This team of visitors needs training. Extensive reference to this was made earlier in this presentation. At this point, however, let it be emphasized strongly that these visitors are to be trained not simply to invite but to witness. The purpose of their visits is not to win members for a congregation but to win souls for salvation. One of the points which must receive

strong emphasis is that these witnesses should never make a visit without talking about the Savior. Just as effective preaching by a pastor is not something entirely innate but only results after adequate training and experience, so effective witnessing by the Christian benefits immeasurably from thorough training and experience.

It is not surprising that often the Christian has feelings of reluctance or hesitation about becoming an active witness for his Lord. The Old Adam is at constant war with our Spirit-wrought desires to carry out the will of our Lord. It bears mention, however, that many who have experienced this same reluctance have subsequently been led to experience the rapturous joy of leading a lost soul to his Savior. Could you conceive of a greater blessing which you could render in your lifetime? What immense gratification there is for one to know that God has used him as a tool in leading a soul destined for eternal doom to the rapture of heavenly bliss! God wants to use you as such a tool!

Training Materials

It should be apparent that in a presentation such as this it is simply impossible to list all of the procedures or mechanics for an efficient program of evangelism on the congregational level. Excellent materials on this subject, however, are available. Two booklets prepared by our Synod's Commission on Evangelism can be effectively used. They are entitled "Train to be Witnesses unto Me" and "Organize to be Witnesses unto Me." The Commission on Evangelism of the Michigan District has prepared an excellent manual entitled "Sharing the Savior." Congregations have used this manual effectively and with thorough satisfaction. The same is true of a Lenten program prepared by the Michigan District for reclaiming inactive members and which carries the title "Strengthen thy Stakes." A book which we have found extremely informative and stimulating is "The Church in the Community" by Arthur E. Graf. It is a book upon which this writer drew heavily in developing this presentation. Obviously in a book such as this there will be items which are not adaptable, feasible, or desirable for every congregation. However, as resource material it is extremely valuable.

C. The Pastor's Role in Visitation

Finally, one must again single out the importance of the pastor in any type of evangelism program. It would appear inconceivable that a congregation could initiate and carry out an evangelism program without the enthusiastic support and leadership of the pastor. It is our conviction that a conscientious study of the merits of such a program will convince a majority of pastors that it has far-reaching benefits. Enthusiastic concern for Christian witnessing brings us to a last aspect of "evangelism in practice" which we regard as having prime importance, and that is passion.

III. Passion

Passion for souls lies at the very heart of the Church's mission. As stated by Arthur Graf: "Passion is to a program what gas is to a car. Passion is the substance which moves the program, and without it congregations never get much beyond reworking programs. Standing and sitting committees will rarely become walking and talking committees where there is no passion."

Passion Motivated by Love for Christ

Where does such passion have its origin? What motivates the child of God to show such passion? It is love for Christ and love for Christ alone which is the source of that motivation. The child of God has a fervent love for his Savior and for the precious salvation which He won. This is what motivates the Christian to do what Jesus said to the demoniac, "Return to thine own house and show how great things God hath done unto thee" (Luke 8:38).

The work of the Church is a work of life and death. The success of the Gospel in penetrating and taking root in a man's heart determines whether that soul will spend eternity in the horrors of hell or in the happiness of heaven. With our present-day world seemingly sinking deeper and deeper into the depths of depravity, one might well wonder why the Almighty continues to permit this world to exist. There is only one answer. Our loving God in His infinite mercy is still sparing this world, so that the Church may continue its mission of calling sinners to repentance.

A. The Cost of Salvation

Paid by the Savior

Carrying out this mission requires great effort and continual sacrifice. Christians willingly expend such effort and make such sacrifices when they have a passion for souls. For us it is a wondrous blessing that the Gospel is free. The gift of salvation is one that God offers to us freely. But when we speak of the Gospel as free, let us not think that there was no cost. The cost was paid by our Savior. The price He paid was the shedding of His life's blood. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Cor. 6:20).

Borne by the Disciples and Christian Martyrs

There were others who paid a cost - not a cost for their salvation but a cost so that the free Gospel might be transmitted to us. We think of the Lord's apostles. How frequently they were severely persecuted because of their witnessing! Yet their response was consistently that which was uttered by Peter and John, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). To receive "five times forty stripes save one" would most likely deter many of us from witnessing for Christ. Yet that was only the beginning of the apostle Paul's catalog of suffering. Add to this the cry of the martyrs that has risen through the centuries, and it becomes very evident that the Gospel of salvation was delivered to us at a cost that mathematics cannot measure and for which money cannot serve.

Are we ready to pay the cost? Do we have an intense passion for the lost souls of our neighborhood or our community? Even a cursory look at conditions in today's world indicates that Christ's members must stand ready to make the fullest possible use of their talents to bring the risen Christ to a fallen world. Alarming statistics can be cited, which intensify the Christian's passion for those who are lost. There are approximately 3,000,000,000 people in the world. Only 888,800,000 even claim affiliation with some Christian church. In our own country, which people like to call Christian, there are over 73,000,000 unchurched; 20,000,000 children receive no religious instruction; three-fourths of our youth do not attend church. Some 11,000 babies are born in the United States every day, about 4,000,000 a year. About forty percent of these children are born to families which have no church affiliation.

Nor does the rural population differ drastically from this picture. If one regards the rural population as such living in towns of 2,500 or less, the salient fact is that one-half of the unchurched, over 37,000,000 live in rural communities. We must face the stark reality that under present conditions the world and our country are daily become more and more heathen.

B. A Congregational Check List

What passion do we have for such who are mired in the muck of sin? What efforts are our congregations making to reach those about us who live without faith and hope? Permit me to present a short check list so that you may briefly evaluate the dedication your congregation is showing in respect to a practical evangelism ministry.

AN ABBREVIATED CONGREGATIONAL CHECK LIST

1. Does my congregation place much emphasis on the fact that every Christian is called to witness for Jesus Christ? Yes _____ No _____
2. Does my congregation have a defined geographical area of responsibility within which it seeks to serve intensively, discovering and reaching every person who is without Christ and His Church? Yes _____ No _____
3. Does my congregation periodically conduct a religious canvas of the area or community in which it is located? Yes _____ No _____
4. Does my congregation have a dedicated and active evangelism committee? Yes _____ No _____
5. Does my congregation train members for the responsible task of witnessing? Yes _____ No _____
6. Does my congregation periodically review the number of adult confirmands in past years and evaluate this past performance? Yes _____ No _____
7. Does my congregation maintain an active interest in families of the congregation in which either the husband or wife is unchurched? Yes _____ No _____
8. Does my congregation have ways of discovering members who are becoming inactive and of seeking to reclaim them for Jesus Christ? Yes _____ No _____
9. Does my congregation have a soul responsibility list, containing names of persons whom it must confront personally with the message of Jesus Christ? Yes _____ No _____
10. Does my congregation maintain an up-to-date Cradle Roll and keep a watchful eye over the religious instruction of the young? Yes _____ No _____
11. Does my congregation provide means by which members may submit names of persons who ought to be on the congregation's soul responsibility list? Yes _____ No _____
12. Does my congregation make diligent efforts to enroll unchurched children in its Sunday school? Yes _____ No _____

Many more questions for self-evaluation could be raised. Suffice it to say that if your answers to the questions just posed are predominately negative, it would be well to examine the passion which your congregation is showing for those lost and doomed by sin.

Passion is born of love - love for one's fellow man, love for the eternal salvation of one's neighbor. Such passion, born of love, has its origin in God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). Like passion was displayed by the Savior. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25). St. Paul exhibited such a passion for souls that he spoke about laboring under an inner compulsion. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). And what was the source of this passion? In his second epistle to the Corinthians he writes, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14).

C. The Role of the Pastor in Passion

Again we conclude this section with reference to the pastor. If passion for souls is to be burning in the hearts of a congregation's members, it must be blazing intensely in the heart of the pastor. It can be quite safely stated that any evangelism outreach of a congregation will not succeed unless it is initiated and supported with vigorous leadership by the pastor. Nor is the pastor left with a choice. As stated in the introduction to this presentation, Paul's words to Timothy are the words of the Good Shepherd to all of the under-shepherds: "Do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5). Or as Beck translates: "Do your work of telling the good news." Every day the conscientious pastor spends many hours in carrying out the various functions of his office. But how many hours does he spend or is he able to spend in a week or in a month in seeking to reach the lost souls in his own back yard? In far too many cases is it not a case that these hours number very few?

Conclusion

To say that a majority of members and congregations of the Wisconsin Synod would profit by giving serious thought to their evangelism efforts can hardly be contradicted. A study of the past points to some glaring and disappointing deficiencies in this vital work.

The report of the Board for Home Missions to this convention indicates that the goal established for adult confirmations during the past year was 635. The number of confirmations reported is 404 or 64 percent of the goal. According to the latest statistical report our Wisconsin Synod numbers 271,117 communicants. Of this number 2,740, or slightly over one percent, were adult confirmands. Stated another way, there was one adult confirmation for every 99 communicant members of our Synod. Are not some soul-searching questions in order? How many people did you bring to the Lord during the past year? How many efforts did you make? How often did you witness?

As you return to your homes and as you report back to your respective congregations and delegate conferences, I ask that you stress the importance of evangelism in the work of every congregation. Pray to our merciful Lord that He give us willing and zealous witnesses. Pray that He impress upon us the necessity of earnestly carrying out this work "while it is day before the night cometh when no man can work." If you have any questions about procedure,

the Commission on Evangelism in your district will be eager to provide you with all the necessary help and materials which you need.

"Lord, here am I, send me!"

Apart from those who suffer from severe mental illness or severe mental retardation, none of us lacks the gifts necessary to "speak the truth in love." How often have we not sung: "If you cannot speak like angels, If you cannot preach like Paul, You can tell the love of Jesus, You can say He died for all." Not only can we say it: God has obligated us to say it. After His triumphant resurrection Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And so He sends us. May our response to this commission be that which we repeatedly sing: "Lord, here am I, send me, send me!"

Daniel W. Malchow