

Evangelism

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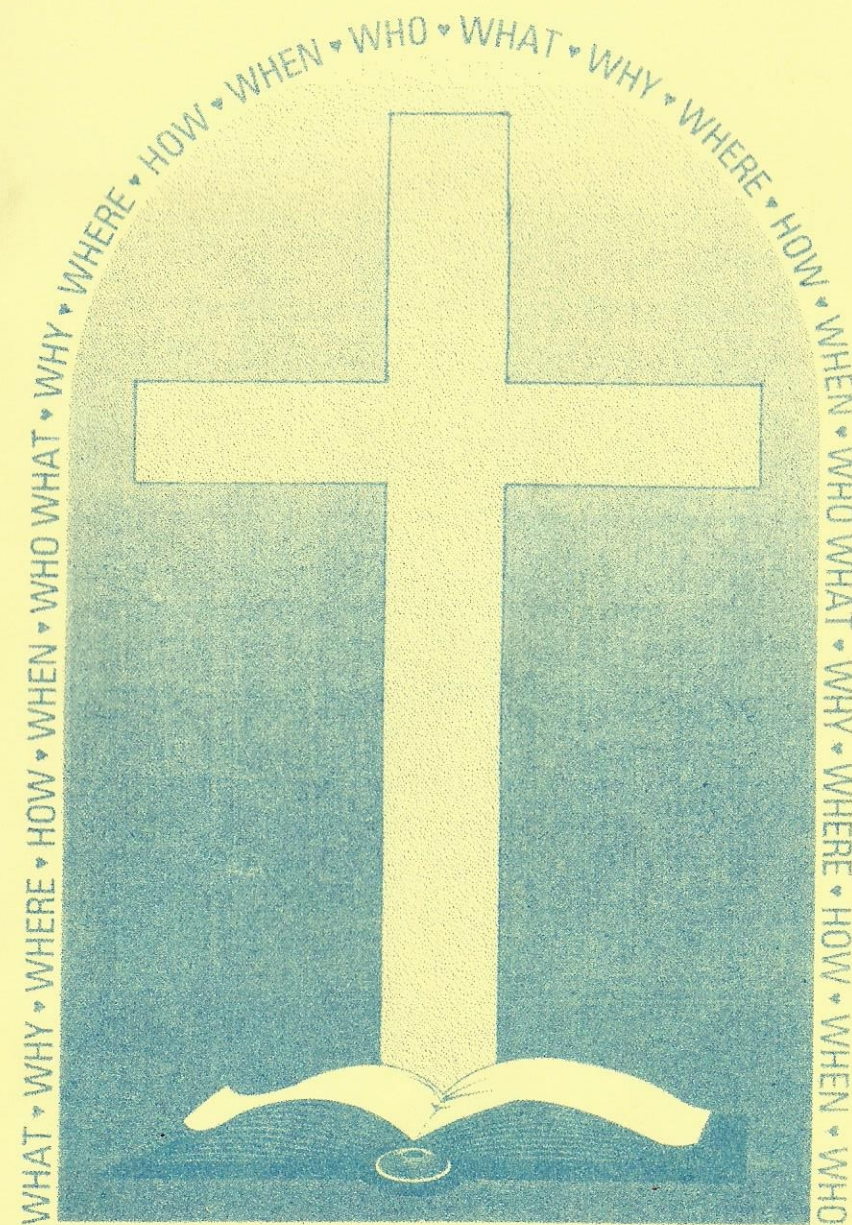
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EVANGELISM

Chapter one

EVANGELISM—Where?...

"Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19). "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47). "And ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

All of these words are from the lips of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They were spoken toward the close of His earthly ministry. Before He ascended to His glory, our Lord wanted to make clear what He expected of His followers. The substance of each of these commands of our Lord is that His believers are to be engaged in evangelism.

To "evangelize" means to preach the Gospel, to preach the glad tidings or good news of the Savior. The Lord's gracious good will is that, as long as they are living here below, His believers carry the good news of salvation out into the world.

How are we fulfilling this divinely given mission? We intend to undertake this series of articles treating the Where, Why, What, When, Who, and How of evangelism. We harbor no illusions that these articles will exhaust the subject matter. Our prayer is simply that God the Holy Spirit, who alone can, will use these articles to inspire us all to be better witnesses to Him who so loved us that He gave Himself for us, to Him who so graced us as to enlist us unworthy sinners into His service.

Where? Into all the World

It is clear from the above words of our Lord that the Gospel of the Savior is to be proclaimed worldwide, universally, without

restrictions as to race or place. *All the world is a mission field for our Lord's Gospel.* The reason for this is that only this Gospel can save poor sinners, for Jesus says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (Jn. 14:6).

Furthermore, just after giving His commission according to Mark's Gospel, Jesus added: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). How urgent it is therefore for us the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).



We in the CLC should ever be alert to doors the Lord might open to us anywhere in the world for proclaiming His saving Gospel. Yes, we will want to pray that He might open such doors for us on other continents, as He has in the past in countries like Japan, Nigeria, India and Thailand. Because of limitations in the areas of manpower and financial resources, we know we cannot reach everybody. But we will want to be ready and willing to do everything we possibly can to carry the Gospel to the shores of other lands.

If we are to do this, we must, among other things, *guard against narrow-minded provincialism.* We dare not excuse a half-hearted Gospel outreach by appealing to the fact that we are seeking to maintain a confessionally sound church in our own little corner of the world. In fact, with our rich heritage as a church of the pure Word and doctrine, we in the CLC ought to feel an even greater responsibility to share what God has so graciously entrusted to us.

Where? Beginning at Jerusalem

At the same time let us be reminded of the need for evangelism *in our own country, in our own cities and backyards.* According to Luke, Jesus instructed His disciples to preach His name among all nations "beginning at Jerusalem." On the Mount

of Ascension the Lord told His disciples to witness unto Him "in Jerusalem and in all Judea" as well as in Samaria and unto the farthest reaches of the earth.

Does it seem strange to us that the Lord would say this? He no doubt feared that, in their holy zeal to evangelize, His disciples would be tempted to neglect the spiritual needs of their own people and countrymen. Are we tempted likewise? Is not our country saturated with religion? Are not our American cities filled with churches? Do not the radio and television evangelists reach many others? Why, then, should we be concerned about evangelizing here? Remember that

Millions of people are simply modern, learned, sophisticated pagans—to put it bluntly.

Judea, too, was filled with synagogues. Jerusalem, too, had its soap-box preachers, the Pharisees, on almost every street corner (Cf. Mt. 6:5). Yet the Lord mentioned precisely Judea and Jerusalem as places His disciples should not neglect in their evangelism activity. The reason for this is that "religion" itself cannot, will not, save souls. The only thing which saves lost and condemned creatures is Spirit-wrought faith in the Lord Jesus and His Gospel.

With all the religion in the United States, we need to realize the spiritual bankruptcy of many of our own countrymen. At the time of this writing, the number of unchurched in our country is an astounding 156,000,000. In line with this, a spokesman for the Lutheran World Federation is quoted as saying: "Millions of men and women in North America and Europe are as ignorant of Jesus Christ as the so-called pagans in other parts of the world. Millions of people are simply modern, learned, sophisticated pagans—to put it bluntly."

Is such bluntness sometimes needed to shock us into reality? When we speak of paganism, don't our thoughts generally turn to the grossly idolatrous peoples in the jungles of Africa and Asia?

Surely these need to be reached with the Gospel. Nevertheless, all without saving faith in Christ are outside the kingdom of God regardless of how polished and refined, learned and sophisticated, modern and advanced.

Ancient Greece was a center of wisdom and learning. Yet the Apostle Paul spoke of their need for the "foolishness" of the preaching of Christ crucified (Cf. I Corinthians 1:21ff.). Let there be no mistake about it: Our modern, industrialized, sophisticated information-based society is composed of people who are as spiritually blind and dead by nature as are the indigents in other nations. For this reason the unceasing proclamation and advancement of the Gospel of Christ is needed "at home" as much as "abroad." With the Apostle Paul we know we are debtors "both to the Greeks (sophisticated pagans) and to the barbarians (the less sophisticated)" (Rom. 1:14).

Where? In our home congregations

We need to suggest a place even closer to home—in our home congregations. A tract entitled "Strengthen Thy Brethren" points out well that the words of the Lord Jesus to Peter ("When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" in Luke 22:32) are intended for all of us. Doesn't the following remark touch a nerve: "All of us know that we have the weak and straying in our congregations, but we are not all and not always willing and prepared to strengthen our fellow Christians who are becoming spiritually weak or have already become 'fringe' members."

Surely the Lord had also such weak and straying members in mind when He told His disciples to evangelize "in Jerusalem" even as they laid their plans to venture out into the uttermost parts of the earth. All of us will want to regularly hear the Word and partake of the Sacrament in order *to strengthen ourselves* in our holy Christian faith. Then we shall be better equipped *to strengthen our fellow-members* in the faith. *Then we and they together* shall be more zealous and prepared to carry out our privileged calling as witnesses unto Christ in all the world.

Chapter two

EVANGELISM - Why?

As we heard in chapter one, evangelism means to preach the Gospel, the Good News of a Savior from sin, death, Satan, and hell. This Good News is to be proclaimed everywhere, universally, as the Savior directed: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16: 15).

Why is it so necessary that each and every human being hear this Gospel? The answer can be found in the Lord's words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall he saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). There are only two possible destinies for human beings—salvation and damnation. It is either eternal life in heaven, or eternal damnation in hell.

Heaven or Hell

And what a contrast! The Bible refers to this contrast in verses such as this: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). Also: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt. 25:46).

Hell is a place of eternal torment (Lk. 16:23ff., Rev. 20:10, Is. 66:24); of darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12); of experiencing forever the wrath of God with fire and brimstone (Rev. 14:10f.). Hell was originally intended only for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41).

By contrast, eternal life in heaven is described as being forever with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17, Jn. 17:24, Phil. 1 :23, Rev. 21 :3); it is a place of everlasting joy and gladness (Is. 35:10) and pleasures forevermore (Ps. 16:11); it will be totally free of tears and crying, sighing and mourning, hunger and thirst, heat and pain

(Is. 26:8, 35:10, 49:10, 60:20, Rev. 7:16f., 21:4). Read the last two chapters in the Bible (Rev. 21 & 22) to catch a glimpse of the glory of eternal life in heaven.

In order that fallen mankind might enter eternal bliss, escaping the damnation of hell which for its sins it deserves, God sent His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to live a sinless life for us, then innocently to suffer and die in our place on the cross of Calvary. The Savior's cry from the cross: "It is finished!" signaled that He had completed God's work of redeeming mankind from sin, death, Satan, and hell. As a seal of man's redemption, God the Father raised His Son from the dead.

Since the work of redemption has been accomplished on the cross of Calvary, that cross stands as the dividing line between heaven and hell for sinners. To believe in Jesus as Savior means eternal life; not to believe in Him means eternal death in hell. How urgent, then, is the need to evangelize, to tell the Good News of the Savior throughout the world!

Jesus is the only Savior

"God our Savior will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:3f.) Jesus Christ is that "truth" whom all men must know and confess. Jesus Christ is the "way," the only way to the bliss of eternal life in heaven. Jesus Christ is the "life," for He conquered death and hell. *There is no other way, no other truth, no other life, outside of Jesus Christ.*

Many disparage this "exclusive truth claim" of Christianity. "After all," it is suggested, "don't all roads lead to heaven? Isn't everyone who is sincere in what he believes destined for eternal joy? Isn't one religion as good as another?" This kind of thinking is present, sad to say, also among misguided Christians. At the time of this writing a survey revealed that 42.8% of 4,371 lay

people in Lutheran churches agreed that "of the many religions of the world, most lead to God." Nothing can stifle Christian evangelism as much as such an attitude! Why get excited about preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ if other religions lead to God just as well?

Let us recognize such thinking for what it is: the devil's brew. As has already been said, Jesus Christ calls Himself the way, the truth, and the life, to which He adds: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (Jn. 14:6). Furthermore, when Jesus says, "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (Jn. 10:9), He leaves no room for substitute doorways into heaven. When Jesus says, "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (Jn. 6:35), He leaves no room for any substitute spiritual diet that can feed and sustain the souls of men now and forever. When Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,...and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (Jn. 10:11, 28), He makes clear that all men need to recognize their helpless condition, now and eternally, apart from His shepherdly care and guidance.

If sin is the cause of death—spiritual, temporal and eternal—*there is no salvation apart from Him who is the Savior from sin and its consequences.* Jesus therefore said, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). To die without Christ is to die without the hope (Eph. 2:12), to die eternally, to be forever separated from the presence of God.

Our responsibility

Suppose that a dread disease was sweeping through the community in which you lived. Suppose that you found a remedy that would instantly cure anyone who had this disease. Would you not have a responsibility to share your remedy with others? Indeed you would! You and I as Christians have the only message

whereby lost souls can be saved from the devil's hell. We have the only message that can give hope to those whose lives are filled with despair. We have the only balm for the healing of the world's diseases. We are our brother's keeper, morally responsible to share this message with others. "Ye are My witnesses," says Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:13-15).

"Every time your watch ticks three souls slip into a Christless eternity. The population of the world is approximately four billion people. The average life span for people all over the world is forty years. This means that one hundred million people die each year, 273,972 every day, 11, 415 every hour, 190 every minute, and three people every second." Since you began reading this chapter, how many souls have slipped into a Christless eternity?

The most compelling answer to the "Why?" of evangelism is our own desperate need, and the desperate need of our fellowmen, for the Gospel. "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9), nor should we be! Rather, let us do all we can, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to get the saving message out that a doomed and dying world might escape the horrifying prospect of a Christless eternity in hell!

For the encouragement of His evangelists the Lord promises: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20). "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Lk. 10:19). Through His prophet of old He promised: "My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Is. 55:11)

Chapter three

EVANGELISM - What? - Part I

The word "evangelism" comes from a Greek word which, in its strictest sense, means to preach, announce, or publish the glad tidings of the Gospel. Thus, when we talk about evangelism, we are speaking of a preaching or proclamation. But what is it that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ wants His evangelists to preach or proclaim?

The Savior's Great Commission (Mt. 28:20) includes the command to teach "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." On the basis of these words it needs to be said at the outset that the task of an evangelist for Christ is much broader than many would-be radio and television preachers today would have it. The Lord Jesus does not, nor dare we, limit the content of the message we preach to a few select Bible passages or doctrines.

Nevertheless, when the Lord opens a door for us to speak of our faith, we cannot say everything at once. Therefore we will, if at all possible, proclaim at least the fundamental Bible truths without which poor sinners cannot be brought to saving faith. The extent to which we can proclaim these truths depends on the circumstances and the time we have as well as on our knowledge of these Bible doctrines.

What are the basic truths which a poor sinner needs to know before the Holy Spirit can bring him to a true and saving faith in Christ? A knowledge of sin and its consequences. A knowledge of the person and work of Christ. A knowledge of Christ's bodily resurrection. At the same time we will want to make it known that

this Gospel we are proclaiming rests on the sure and certain Word of God in the divinely inspired Holy Scriptures .

Let us then briefly elaborate on these truths, using as basis the various commissions of our Lord:

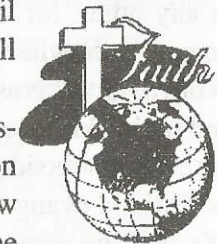
"...Repentance and remission of sins..."

After His resurrection from the dead the Lord told His disciples that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things*" (Lk. 24:47). Notice the importance of bringing a person to a knowledge of sin and its consequences, eternal damnation.

No one can see or appreciate his need for the Savior until he realizes what he for his sins deserves. By nature all men trust in their own goodness for eternal salvation. Until this self-righteousness is shattered, a person will have no interest in the forgiveness of sins.

How is a person's natural self-righteousness shattered? Only through the proclamation of God's holy, unchanging Law, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20), and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The sinner must also be taught to repent of his sins, that is, to plead with the tax collector in the temple: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk. 18:9-14). The forgiving grace of God in Christ is for those who are "poor and of a contrite spirit, and tremble" at God's Word (Is. 66:2; also Is. 57:15; Ps. 34:18; Ps. 51:17; Lk. 4:18). "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28).

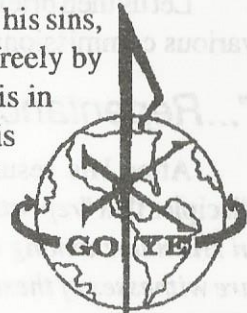
There are no exceptions. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Dt. 27:26). "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Is. 2: 10). We will want to have such Bible passages at our fingers' tips. We will want to use them whenever the Holy Spirit



shows us there is need.

Then we will, in Jesus' saving name, announce to the convicted sinner the remission or forgiveness of his sins, showing how all men have been "justified freely by (God's) grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23). "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

"...Unto Me ..."



Our Lord prayed: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3). The apostles declared: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The entire Word of God has as its chief aim and goal bringing sinners to a true and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. No one can or will be saved for eternity outside of Jesus Christ. We will be miserable failures as Christ's evangelists unless we faithfully fulfill His directive: "*Ye shall be witnesses unto Me*" (Acts 1:8).

But who is Jesus Christ? When a door was opened for the evangelist Philip to proclaim the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, we are told that he "preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). Philip preached Jesus not merely as a great teacher, a good man, a noble moral example, but rather as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He preached Jesus as He truly was and is: the promised Messiah, the God-Man, the Savior of the world. In no uncertain terms, this is what we will want to proclaim regarding Jesus Christ.

All false views of Jesus Christ have in common a denial of His being true God or His being true Man, or both. Against these false views the Scriptures teach that Jesus is both true God and true Man in one person.

That Jesus Christ is true God is taught when the Bible

ascribes to Him divine names (Is. 48: 17; Jn. 3: 14-18; Mt. 17:5; Jn. 4:42; Mt. 1:23; Jn. 1:14). The Bible also ascribes to Him divine attributes: He is eternal (Jn. 1: 1 -2), all-powerful and present everywhere (Mt. 28: 18-20), and all-knowing (Jn. 1 :43-51; Jn. 21: 17). The four Gospels tell of many divine works performed by Jesus (Jn. 2:1-11; Lk. 5:18-26; Mt. 8:23-27; Jn. 11:38-44; Mt. 28:6-7).

At the same time the Scriptures testify that Jesus was and is true Man. Check the human characteristics ascribed to the Lord in Lk. 2:12, 39-52; Mt. 4:2; Mk. 4:38; Jn. 11:35; Jn. 19:28; Mt. 26-27.

Jesus had to be both true God and true Man in one person in order to save sinners. Had He been God only, He could not have died on the cross as the divine Substitute for sinners. Had He been man only, He could not have kept the Law of God perfectly for us, nor would His death on the cross have had the power to save. In summary we confess with Martin Luther in his explanation of the Second Article: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."

"...Preach the Gospel..."

Jesus told His disciples: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mk. 16:15). On the basis of these words we emphasize the need to tell others of the blessed work of the Savior.

To be saved from sin and its consequences, sinners needed to be redeemed or bought back from the power of the devil, who had taken mankind captive. This work of redemption is far beyond anything that man, the sinner, can do for himself or for others.

"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious" (Ps. 49:7-8). Nothing man can do by way of works or offer by way of payment will satisfy the justice of the holy and righteous God. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt. 16:26)

What was the ransom price demanded by God for the redemption of men's souls: the holy, precious blood of His own dear Son! "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19; also such beautiful Gospel passages as 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Gal. 3:13 Eph. 1:7; Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 1:7 Is. 53:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:19-21).

Martin Luther summarizes the work of the Savior in these words: "...*who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death, that I should be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; even as He is risen from death, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true!*"

Our testimony to Christ and His saving work will include the fact that He is risen from the dead, for "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15:14). True saving faith cannot exist in the heart of one who denies the bodily resurrection of the Savior, and therewith the coming resurrection of the dead. When some of the Corinthians declared that "there is no resurrection of the dead" (I Cor. 15:12), Paul informed them that they knew nothing of God (I Cor. 15:34) and were denying Christianity by denying one of its essential teachings. Jesus said the same thing to the resurrection-denying Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt. 22:29).

As Christ's evangelists, we will say with the apostle Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

Chapter four

EVANGELISM - What? - Part II

Our goal as Christ's evangelists is to bring people to know their only Savior, Jesus Christ, and all that God has done for us in Him. We are to preach or proclaim that Gospel which is summarized so beautifully in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The content of this Gospel-in-a-sentence is basic and fundamental to all our Christian witness.

However, the Lord Jesus Himself, in His Great Commission in Matthew 28: 19-20, expands on the contents of our message. All evangelism, to be truly Christian, will carry with it an awareness of the broader responsibility laid before us in Christ's words: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." If any portion of this Great Commission is ignored, a grave injustice is done over against our charge from the Lord Himself and over against those who are the objects of our evangelistic efforts.

Doctrine is important

The Lord's charge to His disciples was to "make disciples" of all nations. A disciple is a pupil or learner. "To disciple" someone is to bring that person to see and perceive the need to follow a certain teacher's precepts or instructions in all things. The Lord's charge to His original twelve disciples was that they should bring people from all nations under the solemn sway of all His sacred teachings as these are set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

A careful appraisal of the Savior's Great Commission leads to no other conclusion but that Christian evangelism involves the

setting forth of true and sound Bible doctrine. Let us briefly consider why the teaching of sound doctrine is important.

Dr. C. F. W. Walther, one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod once said in a sermon: "In our day it is common for people to say, 'Emphasizing doctrine so much only harms and hinders the kingdom of God, yes, even destroys it.' Many say, 'Instead of disputing over doctrine so much, we should rather be concerned with souls and with leading them to Christ.'"

Dr. Walther continued: "All who speak in this way do not really know what they are saying or what they are doing. As foolish as it would be to scold a farmer for being concerned about sowing good seed and to demand of him simply to be concerned about a good harvest, so foolish it is to scold those who are concerned first

and foremost with doctrine, and to demand of them that they should rather seek to rescue souls. For just as the farmer who wants to harvest a good crop must first of all be concerned about good seed, so the church must above all be concerned about right doctrine if it would save souls."

Dr. Walther's words from over a century ago are just as timely for us today. The fuzzy thinking he refers to is present as much as ever in our day. And the

answer he gives captures precisely the point that needs to be underscored in connection with the scope of our Savior's Great Commission.



The Urgency of Witnessing

A line made up of all the lost people in the world would circle the earth thirty times. This line grows at the rate of twenty miles per day.

For just as the farmer who wants to harvest a good crop must first of all be concerned about good seed, so the church must above all be concerned about right doctrine if it would save souls.

True Doctrine and soul-saving

We of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) have been entrusted with a most precious treasure, the pure and unadulterated Word of our Savior-God. We have the only saving Gospel in all its comfort and beauty. Surely then we desire to keep ourselves, through the power of the Holy Spirit, under the sweet sway of that Gospel which proclaims that "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). That Gospel proclaims that we have been "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). That Gospel leads to only one conclusion, namely, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

This doctrine of the Gospel is the hub of the wheel from which all other Bible doctrines emanate forth as the spokes. The losing or loosening of any one doctrine or "spoke" of God's Word can have

most serious consequences for our holy faith, as God's Word teaches: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). The many Scripture passages which warn about false teachers and false doctrines, teaching us to "beware of" and "avoid them" have their application here. (See Mt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; 1 Jn. 4:1; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Jer. 23:28-31, and others.) Also consider carefully the Master's words in John 8:31: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

On the one hand, if, because of our concern for teaching and

Woe be to us if we of the CLC strangle the zeal which the Gospel seeks to inspire in us, namely, the zeal to give the Gospel away, share it, whenever we can.

upholding true doctrine, we are accused of not being properly concerned with the saving of souls, we rest our case with the words of the Savior's Great Commission! As soldiers in Christ's army we take our marching orders from Him, not from popular opinion or from what human wisdom deems expedient.

On the other hand, let us take it to heart that we are to be about this matter of making disciples of all nations, as the Savior directs. Woe be to us if we of the CLC strangle the zeal which the Gospel seeks to inspire in us, namely, the zeal to give the Gospel away, share it, whenever we can. The first words of the Great Commission direct us: "Go ye therefore!"

Painting a Right Picture

There are many evangelists abroad in the land who, for the sake of "getting results," paint a distorted picture of Christianity and Christian discipleship. Like the salesman who talks up the good points of his product and conceals its disadvantages, such evangelists stress the positive at the expense of the negative.

"Let us not be shocked by the suggestion that there are disadvantages to the life in Christ. There most certainly are. Abel was murdered, Joseph was sold into slavery, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions, Stephen was stoned to death, Paul was beheaded, and a noble army of martyrs was put to death by various painful methods all down the long centuries. And where the hostility did not lead to such violence (and mostly it did not and does not) the sons of this world nevertheless managed to make it tough for the children of God in a thousand cruel ways. Everyone who has lived for Christ in a non-Christian world has suffered some losses and endured some pains that he could have avoided by the simple expedient of laying down his cross.

"Our Lord called man to follow Him, but He never made the way look easy. Indeed one gets the distinct impression that He made it appear extremely hard. Sometimes He said things to disciples or prospective disciples that we today discreetly avoid repeating when we are trying to win men to Him. What present-

day evangelist would have the courage to tell an inquirer, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.' And do not we do some tall explaining when someone asks us what Jesus meant when He said, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.' That kind of rugged, sinewy Christianity is left for an occasional missionary or for some believer behind one of the various curtains." (from The Alliance Witness)

Let us beware of the trap which Satan has laid for many would-be evangelists for Christ, a trap in which many of the popular media evangelists get caught. That trap includes making the Gospel a "nose of wax" which can be shaped and molded to suit the face of each succeeding age (as C. H. Spurgeon suggested). That trap includes watering down the teachings of God's Word to make them palatable for the masses. In a word, that trap of Satan is the painting of a distorted picture of Christianity and Christian discipleship.

"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..., teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Recognizing the broad scope of our responsibilities as Christ's evangelists, let us diligently, zealously, prayerfully, solemnly engage ourselves in fulfilling this Great Commission to His Church of all time.

"Lost interest," O Lord can it be?

Lost interest in souls who are calling for Thee?

Those men Whom You loved, and suffered to save?

Lost interest? When millions by sin are enslaved?

Lost interest? Oh, where would I be?

Yes,— lost, had someone lost interest in me.

Open my eyes, Lord, and help me to see:

Lost interest in souls means lost interest in Thee!

Chapter five

EVANGELISM - What? - Part III

When writing to the Ephesian Christians, the apostle Paul taught that the risen, ascended, exalted Christ "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). As the apostle here uses the term "evangelist," it is limited to certain ones who have special Spirit-wrought gifts for proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus. For example, Philip is called, specifically, an evangelist (Acts 21:8). All ministers of the Gospel should be able to do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). On the basis of these uses of the term it can be said that not every Christian is an evangelist.

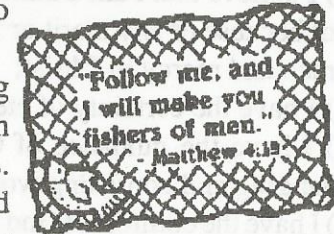
Nevertheless, all Christians are witnesses for Christ and are involved in evangelism in the broader usage of that term. Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Ascension: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." (Acts 1:8) Speaking for all believers, Peter in his Pentecost sermon declared: "We all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32).

Peter and John afford us a definition as well as an example of witnessing in their response to the Jewish rulers who sought to silence their testimony to Christ. The apostles declared: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). In his first epistle the same Peter describes believers as those who "should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Later on he adds: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and 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" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Telling what God has done

A witness, then, is one who testifies from what he has seen, heard, or experienced. Every child of God has the Holy Spirit to help him testify from what he has seen, heard, or experienced regarding the saving Word of God. In other words, every Christian should be able to tell what it means to be a Christian.

The emphasis in our witnessing for Christ should be on what God, in Christ, has done and is doing FOR us. We are soldiers in Christ's army, and as such we are to proclaim publicly



and testify privately to the complete victory He has won for us poor sinners. This needs to be pointed out over against the overly sentimental and subjective emphasis so often heard in the "personal testimonies" in many segments of the Christian Church today, particularly in the media church. This is not to say that a witnessing to what our Savior-God has done for us personally and in our individual lives is out of place. On the contrary, there is both Scriptural command and precedent for it. When the Lord Jesus cast the unclean spirits out of a man, He told the man He had healed: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mk. 5:19). What a powerful testimony was given by the man born blind for whom Jesus restored his sight (Jn. 9). Recall the personal witnessing of the Samaritan woman. After Jesus' discussion with her at Jacob's well, she told her friends; "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" And what was the result? "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman which testified, 'He told me all that ever I did.'" (Read the entire account in John 4. What helpful lessons can be learned in our personal missionary activity from the example of the Master Himself.)

What might be listed as some of the points to which every

Christian can testify regarding his or her faith in Christ? We suggest the following:

- 1) I have the assurance that all my sins are forgiven because Jesus lived and died for me;
- 2) I have peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ;
- 3) I believe that I am a child of God and member of His Church, not because of any merit or worthiness in me, but because of His grace and mercy in Christ;
- 4) I have the certainty of eternal life through Jesus, my Savior;
- 5) I have the guidance of God's true and unerring Word in a changing and confusing world;
- 6) I have the comfort of God's promises in times of personal stress and trouble;
- 7) I want to be faithful to the only true God, the Triune God, and remain in fellowship with His people;
- 8) I want my children to believe in Jesus, to serve Him, and to be loyal to His Word;
- 9) I have the desire and the motivation through God the Holy Spirit to lead a life consecrated to the service of God and my fellowmen;
- 10) I want to share the blessings of the Christian faith with all men.

With such and similar testimony the child of God witnesses to the hope that is within his heart.

We are called to be witnesses unto Christ, to His person and His saving work in our behalf.

We should not think that it's our primary duty to get people to join our particular church or synod. We are called to be witnesses unto Christ, to His person and His saving work in our behalf. Hopefully such witnessing will result in the person's wishing to inquire further into the teachings of the Scriptures and our confession of the truth of God's Word. For since it is our commission from the Lord to make others disciples of the Lord

(Mt. 28:19), and being a disciple implies a continuing in His Word and an avoidance of error (Jn. 8:31; Jn. 10:5), we certainly pray that the Holy Spirit will bring about in those to whom we testify a desire to become active members of a true teaching fellowship. But this is something which the Holy Spirit alone can accomplish.

Our life as a witness

We have yet to note that our entire life is a witnessing process, be it good or bad. Our actions and behavior, as well as our speech and deeds, are all forms of which tell others something about us and serve. Our Lord had this in mind when He His disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth" the light of the world." (Mt. 5:13ff.) We light, our Christian life, shine before men may see our good deeds and praise our Father which is in heaven. All that we are is to speak out regarding our relationship to God.



Caring and sharing

Let us pray that we might all be faithful witnesses to Christ. Let us be ready at all times to testify to the hope that is in us with meekness and with fear. We have the assurance of the blessing of God the Holy Spirit whenever we testify to what we have seen with the eyes of faith, heard from God's holy and saving Word, and experienced through the regenerating power and daily renewing of the self-same Spirit.

*Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,
And love that soul through me,
And may I gladly do my part
To win that soul for Thee!*

Chapter six

EVANGELISM—Who?

This is now the sixth part in our series on Evangelism. We have touched upon the "Where?" of Evangelism (into all the world, beginning at home); the "Why?" (the desperate need of all sinners to hear the only saving Gospel of Jesus Christ); and the "What?" (in three chapters, detailing the bare essentials of our Gospel witness, the importance of purity of doctrine in our witnessing, and telling of what Christ has done for us personally and individually). It is still our intention to say some things regarding the "Who, When, and How" of Evangelism, as well as some thoughts concerning the results.

When it comes to the "Who?" of Evangelism, it has already been pointed out that every Christian is a witness to Christ, is an

evangelist in the broadest use of the term. This fact needs to be underscored. Jesus says of His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" and "ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13f). Speaking to His disciples Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" not "ye shall do witnessing." *Christian witnessing, then, is not really something we do, it is something we are.* The arm of the child of

The arm of the child of God does not have to be twisted to get him to be a witness...He is a witness by virtue of the new life given him by the Spirit of God...

God does not have to be twisted to get him to be a witness of the Lord. He is a witness by virtue of the new life given him by the Spirit of God in holy baptism. When the child of God lives as the new creature in Christ that he is (2 Cor. 5:17), His entire life by word and deed will testify to his Lord and Savior. And the result will be that others will be led to glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Mistaken ideas

The truth that every child of God, as such, is a witness to Christ is very basic and important. But at the same time there is need and place for encouraging Christians to be the witnesses they are. This is so because Christians still have the old sinful flesh and blood which so often interferes.

One of the many things which can hinder Christian witnessing, as far as lay-people are concerned, is a mistaken idea of their role in Christ's Church. Consider these words- "Many people conceive of a ladder of dedication. At the top is the missionary, particularly the one who goes overseas. Just below comes the pastor. Then the professional religious worker. Finally down on the bottom rung is the lowly layman, sometimes looking as if he is barely on the ladder at all. The layman thus becomes a sort of also-ran Christian whose chief function is to pay the bills for the pastor and fill up the pews for the public services of the church." ("The Layman as Witness," appearing in Christianity Today in 1968.)



Do the lay-people in our congregations feel (or are they made to feel) like they are "also-ran Christians"? Do they feel (or are they made to feel) like they have done all that is expected of them if they attend church services and bring a weekly offering? As important as church attendance and contributions are, do our lay-people understand that their chief function as members of Christ's Church is that they are—should be—witnesses to the Lord in all they do and say?

Consider also: "The picture of the clergyman on the front lines, fighting the lonely battle for God, while the members in the rear send up supplies so their paid representatives can fight harder may appeal to the selfish, lazy, and materialistic inclinations in us, the members. It may also appeal to the pastor whose ego is gratified by his position of religious authority, prestige, and

recognition. But it clearly does great injustice to the scriptural principles of Christian witnessing and the mobilization of the Church." ("The Layman as Witness" cited above)

Mobilization of the Church

A study of what the Bible has to say about the mobilization of the Church makes abundantly clear that there is no "select upper crust" of Christians under which are "lowly lay-people" from whom God expects less by way of dedication, less by way of commitment to Christ, or less by way of witnessing to Him. There are no "also-ran" Christians.

When the Lord Jesus said, "Ye are witnesses of these things" (Lk. 24:47), He was not talking only of His original twelve disciples, nor for that matter only of those who are called pastors and teachers in His Church. Those words included all of Jesus' disciples without exception. We see this carried through

in a practical way in Acts 8:4: "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." The early Christian Church mobilized itself in such a way that when its members were persecuted for the faith, all of them, including the lay-people, witnessed to Christ wherever they went, boldly and eagerly, by both deed and word.

Peter was speaking of all Christians alike when he said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (2 Peter 2:9). It ought, then, to be clear that no child of God is doing his duty as a Christian if he leaves the matter of witnessing up to those who are the "paid representatives" of Christ's Church.

The pastor's role

The familiar words of Paul to the Ephesians give us further insight into the divine blueprint for mobilization of Christ's Church on earth. Christ "gave us some men to be apostles, some to speak the word, some to tell the good news, some to be pastors and teachers [...to what end? for what purpose?] in order to get His holy people ready to serve as workers and build the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11f, AAT). While our called pastors and teachers will surely be alert to opportunities they have to share the Gospel with non-members, that is not their chief calling. *Our Lord's apostle teaches us that pastors and teachers are to concentrate their efforts on building up the faith of the members, so that they, in turn, will become ever-better witnesses to Christ out in the world.* To that end pastors will "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). To that end, a faithful pastor will "hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

Let the lay-members of our congregations thank the Lord from the bottom of their hearts if they have "paid representatives" who are intent upon faithfully equipping the believers for their work as Christ's ministers, Christ's servants, Christ's witnesses. Let the lay-members of our churches faithfully attend worship services, Bible Classes and other meetings where their called servants bring them the edifying, faith strengthening, saving Word of God in the Gospel!

That church and that church body which carries on its Gospel work according to Christ's blueprint will be richly blessed. That church and that church body in which both pastors and lay-people realize and accept their respective roles as Christ's servants will also become a blessing to many others in this world. May God graciously help us to be such a church, to the honor and glory of the Savior's name.

EVANGELISM - When?

When it comes to the "When?" of evangelism the first word of our Savior's Great Commission has something for us to consider. According to the original Greek rendering, the Lord does *not* give a command saying: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." Rather than the imperative, a participle is used so that Jesus actually says: "Going therefore..." In other words, discipling the people of all nations is not to be a "hit and miss" undertaking, but it is a continuous, on-going assignment from the Lord of the Church.

To ask "Evangelism — When?" is then to ask a superfluous question. The child of God is always "on the go" for Christ.

At all times, year in and year out, day in and day out, every hour of the day the Christian is "on the go" for Christ.

all times, year in and year out, day in and day out, every hour of the day the Christian is "on the go" for Christ. This is also true wherever he is — at home, at school, at work, or just going out — going shopping, socializing, vacationing, or when he is involved in a countless variety of leisure time activities. There is never a time or a place when, individually or collectively, we Christians can "relax" or take a holiday from the privileged assignment of testifying to Jesus Christ.

Silent testimony

Since by "evangelism" is meant chiefly the oral proclamation of the Good News of the Savior, does this mean that we must continually be "talking up" our Christian faith? Surely our Lord did not intend that to be the case. It often happens that before we

are given the opportunity to speak to others about our faith, the door is opened by the silent testimony of our living the Christian life.

No doubt our readers can think of doors that have been opened to them as a result of the silent testimony of their lives. Two examples come to mind. A fellow Christian, a young lady who was a nurse in an emergency ward in a big city hospital, was one day asked by a co-worker: "How can you always be so happy when working in a place like this?" Thus the Holy Spirit opened the door for her to witness to her faith. She spoke of her hope and trust in a caring, loving Father in heaven.

We don't have to "kick the door open" to find chances to speak of our Savior, but simply be alert to entering the doors the Lord opens for us.

One of our fellow Christians always kept a Bible on his office desk for spare time reading. One day a co-worker who was hostile to the Christian faith asked him, "Do you really believe in angels and all that other stuff in the Bible?" As a result of the silent testimony of this Bible on the desk, occasion was given for testifying to the Christian faith which is founded on the precious Word of God.

Among other things, notice that opportunities to speak of our faith are rarely the result of a conscious effort to "confront" someone with the Gospel. We don't so much make opportunities to witness to Christ as much as we need to recognize and take the opportunities God the Holy Spirit gives. To put it another way, we don't have to "kick the door open" to find chances to speak of our Savior, but simply be alert to entering the doors the Lord opens for us. And He often does this in unusual ways and at unsuspecting times.

Think also of the powerful silent testimony parents give to their children by example, whether for good or for ill! Both Paul

and Peter teach that a powerful testimony is given by a God-fearing spouse to a disobedient one through the "silent treatment" of a godly behavior. An unbelieving spouse may be won for Christ without a word (I Pet. 3:1; I Cor. 7:16).

Letters from Christ

The apostle Paul wrote the Corinthian Christians: "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by everybody. Anyone can see that you are Christ's letter" (2 Cor. 3:2f.—AAT).

Fellow Christians, think of it! The eyes of the world are upon you! Your unchurched neighbors, co-workers, family and friends, are watching you! They are "reading" you to see how you live, how you behave, how you react to temptations and trials. Just as the Pharisees often watched Jesus to see what He would say or do, so people observe Christians as much as ever today to determine from their lives whether there is really anything to the Christian faith.



As the poet has written:

"We are the only Bible the careless world will read,

We are the sinners' Gospel, we are the scoffers' creed."

How circumspect we will want to be so that the type is not crooked nor the print blurred in the "book" or "letter" that is our every day Christian life!

Oral testimony

As has been shown, our deeds do speak, often louder than our words. The silent testimony of our Christian life may, by itself, have the happy result of leading others to glorify our heavenly Father (Mt. 5:16; Jn. 15:8, I Pet. 2:12).

It is also true, however, that people may observe our good works and still not know the Christian Gospel until we tell them. This is no doubt what Peter had in mind when he wrote the following words regarding the "When?" of evangelism: "But make Christ the holy Lord in your hearts. And always be ready to anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have, but be gentle and respectful" (I Pet. 3:15-16—AAT).

Here is where many of us are painfully aware of our weaknesses and deficiencies. Can you not think of times when the Lord opened the door for you to speak up and out about your Christian faith, but you let the opportunity to testify slip away? Where lies the problem?

Is it that we are ashamed of Christ? God forbid! Then we ourselves need to hear and heed the words of Christ when He says:

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38).

Or do we allow certain personal inhibitions, "hang-ups," to muffle our testimony? Do we suppose that "what I have to say won't make any difference anyhow"? Do we feel unnatural or self-conscious about our ability to carry on a religious conversation? Are we fearful of saying the wrong thing, or at least of not saying the right thing clearly enough? Do we think we will say too little or too much and "turn the person off"?

Such feelings, sad to say, are all too common and natural for us because of our sinful human nature. But let us remember how Jesus told His disciples that they should "take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak" (Mt. 10:19). We need to pray for a courageous awareness of the fact that God the Holy Spirit promises to be "with our mouths" even as He promised such well-known but reluctant heroes of faith as Moses (Ex. 4:10ff.), Isaiah (Is. 5:5ff.), and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4ff).

Or is our problem simply one of not keeping up with our study of God's Word since the days of our confirmation? When Peter urges us to "always be prepared" to answer those who make inquiry about the Christian hope we have, the implication is that we should have a rich storehouse of Bible knowledge from which to draw. It means that we should be "at home" in the Scriptures. To this end it means that we need to make use of every opportunity to hear and study God's Word in church with our pastor and fellow-believers. It also means that we should read and study God's Word in the privacy of our homes.

Let us then be ardent students of the sacred teaching of God's Word. Then, with the help of God the Holy Spirit, we shall be prepared to give oral testimony to our faith in the Savior when He opens the door for us to do so.

Chapter eight

EVANGELISM - How? (Part I)

As we sat down to write on this most challenging of all our articles in this Evangelism series, the mail brought an unsolicited packet of literature which promised to bring about an "evangelism explosion" in our congregation. This method is named after Dr. D. James Kennedy, who is identified as an "effective pastor" of an unnamed church in Florida. Dr. Kennedy, it is said, "discovered this now-famous truth" that "Evangelism is caught—not taught." The "Kennedy Method" operates on the principle that people are not willing to witness "because they have never seen it done correctly." It suggests "combining class sessions with actual on-the-job training" under the guidance of local church leaders.

The brochure advocating the "Kennedy Method" states furthermore that "it is no longer enough to have committed Christians. Our defeated world cries out for equipped Christians who can act on the basis of their convictions." It makes the claim that its method is "a dynamic, not a canned approach" to evangelism. It recommends a "personal one-to-one manner of teaching" such as "Paul and Barnabas used with impressive results." More than that, it is suggested that the "Kennedy Method" emulates the teaching style of Jesus Christ whereby "eleven ordinary and unlearned laborers (were) elevated to the role of world changers."

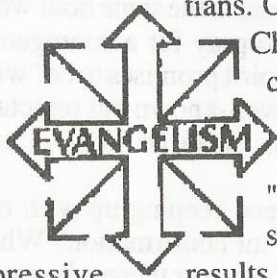
Books have been written, seminars conducted, essays delivered, and round table discussions held on the subject of evangelism and how best to go about it. We feel quite safe in saying that there is no one way and no one answer to the question of how best to evangelize. Judging from the testimonies given by churches which have employed the "Kennedy Method," apparently it has

met with considerable success. Other methods have no doubt been used by other groups of Christians and congregations with effective results. In the final analysis who but the Lord Himself can tell what are the most effective and successful methods to use in spreading His Gospel?

Jesus' methods

If there is one method that is best, it would have to be that which was used by our Lord Jesus Himself. As we briefly consider some of Jesus' methods, let us bear in mind that for the most part He chose common, ordinary people to be His followers and witnesses in the world. Among the Lord's original disciples were men who had nothing like our modern college degree in social work, speech or oratory. They were not chosen because they had some special aptitude, ability, or talent for persuading and convicting people of their personal religious beliefs. They were, in fact, people who were criticized for being "publicans and sinners" and "unlearned and ignorant men." They included people like Matthew whose personal integrity was suspect because of his dubious occupation as a tax-collector for the first-century Roman government. They included men like Peter and Andrew who were much more comfortable mending their fish nets and catching fish than "catching men."

From the ranks of such "garden variety" men and women, the Lord Jesus called those who were to become "world changers." To such ordinary people the Lord Jesus said: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). It is significant that the Lord used the future tense: "I will make." He knew it would take time. He knew it would be necessary for some intensive on-the-job training before these ordinary men could be transformed into such as would "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) with their bold and undaunted witnessing to the Gospel of salvation. (The "Kennedy Method" may have something with its appeal to on-the-job training.)



Before our Lord, on the Mount of Ascension, commissioned His disciples to carry His Gospel into all the world, and even before He sent them His Holy Spirit as the Divine Comforter and Enabler to embolden them as His witnesses, Jesus took them "to school." For approximately three years He took them under His wing. In the personal company of their Lord and Master the disciples learned, by word and deed and example, how to be fishers of men.

St. Matthew's Gospel, for one, tells us how the Master proceeded to convince His disciples of the compelling urgency of the task and at the same time to equip them for it. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chapters 5-7), the Lord sought to deepen their understanding of how radically different Christianity was from what was being offered by the shallow religious teachers of the day. With an authority unmatched before or since, the Master taught.

One of the first things the disciples learned was the basic truth that discipleship to Jesus Christ involves getting to the "heart" of things, of sinners. Only thus could the Kingdom of God and its righteousness be advanced in a sin-darkened world. With a series of statements introduced by the words, "But I say unto you ..." the Master Teacher exposed the prevalent but false and surface religious teachings of the popular but hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. A crucial lesson to be learned was that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord" is, on that basis alone, a true spokesman for, follower of, or witness to Jesus Christ (Cf. Matt. 7:15-23).

There were more, many more, lessons to be learned by the disciples in the school of the Master during their intensive three-year on-the-job training. Among these lessons were the following:

1) their Lord was true Man, supernaturally conceived of the Holy

Ghost and born of the virgin;

- 2) He was at the same time true God, as His countless recorded miracles and divine words bear out;
- 3) sin and sinfulness is man's greatest problem and complete remission of sins in Christ is the only solution to that problem;
- 4) the Spirit leads sinners to make an unqualified personal confession of Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah come to earth to fight the sinner's battle with sin, Satan, and death;
- 5) the Master's victory was culminated by His triumphant bodily resurrection and subsequent ascension to the right hand of His Father;
- 6) His Kingdom was not a kingdom of this world, but rather a spiritual kingdom in it;
- 7) the Gospel of salvation is for all, both Jews and Gentiles, without exception;
- 8) nothing more and nothing less than a childlike faith in Jesus was (all that was) necessary for relief of physical, emotional and spiritual need;
- 9) essential to being a follower of Christ was to have true love and compassion for others in their many and varied needs;
- 10) following the Lord entails no life of ease here below, but rather sacrifice and self-denial in crossbearing;
- 11) Christian discipleship is a full-time calling, with no time off for dallying with the temptations and allurements of this world and its prince, the devil.—*Our Lord "convicted" His disciples of such basic truths as these as part of His equipping them for the urgent task ahead of them.*

Jesus' concern

Furthermore, the disciples were able to witness first-hand Jesus' compassionate, shepherdly care and concern for souls. What lessons the Master taught them as He ministered to the centurion of Capernaum, the Syrophenician woman, the Samaritan woman, the rich young man, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the blind beggar, and many others.

Let us look briefly at how Jesus ministered and witnessed to

the Samaritan woman (John 4). Being true man and therefore wearied after a long journey, the Savior stopped for a drink of water at Jacob's well. A woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water. Jesus struck up a conversation with her. This surprised her because He was a Jew and the Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another. We can learn from this that Jesus did not allow personal prejudices or hang-ups to affect His ministry. He did not discriminate.

In a masterful way the Lord changed the conversation from the "small talk" about the woman's physical thirst to her much greater need, the need of her sin-parched life and soul. He directed her to Himself as the Source of living water which springs up unto everlasting life. Thus, from our Lord we can learn to be alert to opportunities to turn conversation from the light chatter of "weather and sports" to the more serious conversation of spiritual and eternal truths. For this we need to pray that God the Holy Spirit would give us the proper tact so that we might say the right thing without offending the person to whom we are witnessing.

Of the many things that must have been impressed upon the disciples when it came to the methods Jesus used was the fact that He "preached from many different pulpits." The Lord did not use any "canned" method or approach. The disciples observed the Master as He preached to the people by the Sea of Galilee or in the city of Nain, formally in the synagogue or informally at Jacob's well, while riding into Jerusalem on a donkey or while hanging from the cross.

Yet, while the time and place varied, the message was ever and always the same. Jesus always told the world about a God who loved them so much that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die in their place, take their punishment upon Himself, so they could be saved.

When studying the divinely inspired Gospel record of the earthly ministry of our Savior, how much there is for us to learn about the "How?" of Evangelism! Wherever we are or go from day to day in our earthly walk, there we need to pray that God would make us "public Christians"—eager and willing and zealous about sharing the Good News of the only Savior this doomed and dying world will ever have or need!

Chapter nine

EVANGELISM - How? (Part II)

The first installment under the "How?" of Evangelism focused attention on the methods used by our Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. It was noted how He gave His original twelve disciples extensive "on the job" training. We referred to some of the one-to-one situations which exemplified Jesus' methods of witnessing to Himself as the sinner's only Savior.

Jesus' strategy

In his book entitled "The Master Plan of Evangelism" Robert Coleman emphasizes that "The time which Jesus invested in these few disciples was so much more by comparison to that given to others that it can only be regarded as a deliberate strategy. He actually spent more time with His disciples than with everybody else in the world put together." We believe that fact deserves to be underscored. *Though at times our Lord surely did minister to the multitudes, He spent the bulk of His time and efforts in behalf of preparing His disciples to be His witnesses.*

In our circles we are sometimes made to feel that we are "failures" at evangelism, at reaching out with the Gospel, because we spend so much time "preaching to ourselves," edifying and instructing one another within the fellowship. Shouldn't we be endeavoring to follow the strategy of the radio and television evangelists who seem to be obsessed with ministering to masses of people?

Surely we, as our Lord, will not forget that the Gospel is intended for, and needed by, any and all. But we need make no apologies for following the "deliberate strategy" of our Lord which was to firmly ground the inner circle of His disciples in the true teachings of His Word. In the "enemy territory" of this world, there is always great need for establishing one another in the faith.

In the various ways that we do this within our congregations (worship services, church and neighborhood Bible Classes, study of the Word in connection with other congregational organizations), we are helping one another understand "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). The better we understand "the way of God," the better able we will be to confess our faith in Him who is the only Way to God (Jn. 14:6) and then witness that faith to others.

Technique

What about evangelistic technique or programs? On this Coleman writes: "Jesus' method was to conceal the fact that He even had a method. He was His method." And he adds, "This may

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be hard to imagine in this day of professional techniques and sure-fire gimmicks. In some quarters, it would almost appear we would be unable to proceed without a well-illustrated handbook or multi-colored chart showing us what to do. The least we might expect is a class in soul winning. Yet, strange as it may seem, the disciples never had any of these things now considered so essential for the work.

The writer goes on: "All the disciples had to teach them was a Teacher who practiced with them what He expected them to learn. Evangelism was lived before them in spirit and in technique. Watching Him they learned what it was all about. He led them to recognize the need inherent in all classes of people, and the best methods of approaching them. They observed how He drew people to Himself; how He won their confidence and inspired their faith; how He opened to them the way of salvation and called them to a decision. In all types of situations and among

all kinds of people, rich and poor, healthy and sick, friend and foe alike, the disciples watched the Master Soul-winner at work."

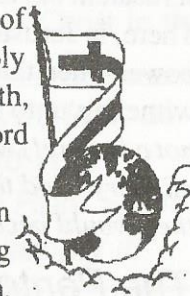
In summary this is said: "Jesus' method wasn't outlined on the blackboard of a stuffy classroom nor written up in a 'Do It Yourself' manual. His method was so real and practical that it just came naturally."

It seems to us that "doing what comes naturally" is not a bad way to answer the question of "How?" to evangelize. *There simply is no formal technique or program that can be substituted for having men and women whose hearts are wholly consecrated by, and dedicated to, Jesus Christ and His Gospel!*

"You Shall Receive Power"

It has been pointed out previously in this series that the child of God is a witness to the Savior by virtue of the new nature. (page 24) According to the regeneration by the Holy Ghost in the heavenly washing of Holy Baptism, the child of God is born anew. He is one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells! Therein lies the power and strength, the confidence and ability, to witness to our Lord Jesus and His Gospel.

How was it with the twelve disciples? Even after the intensive, personal three-year training through which the Lord Jesus had schooled them, they were destined to utter failure if they sought, even for a moment, to proceed or stand on their own. It was after they had received that intensive training that "all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Mt. 26:56). It was following that three-year training period that the disciples were found hiding behind closed doors "for fear of the Jews" (Jn. 20:19). Yes, on the very Mount of Ascension, up to the very last moments of their Savior's bodily presence among them, the earthbound hearts and minds of the disciples held to the all-too-human dream of Christ's Kingdom being of a purely earthly nature. And these were the men who were to become world-changers?



To be sure, something was needed beyond mere human ingenuity on the part of sinful, mortal human beings; beyond mere head knowledge of spiritual truths; beyond mere formal evange-



listic technique or methodology. This is why the Lord Jesus had assured His disciples that He would send them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, after His departure. That Holy Spirit would "teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26). That Holy Spirit would testify to them of Jesus and help them bear witness to Jesus (Jn. 15:26ff). That Holy Spirit would "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," (Jn. 16:8) and would "guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13).

This is why Jesus commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to "wait for the promise of the Father..." (Acts 1:4). There, in Jerusalem, it would come to pass that "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto Me ..." (Acts 1:8). *God the Holy Ghost (a Person, not a feeling!) would descend upon them to prepare them for their ministry. God the Holy Ghost would be the Agent through which they would become world-changers!*

The Pentecost miracle

And most visibly it happened: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven...and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Read the inspiring account of the Pentecost miracle in Acts chapter 2.

But don't stop there! Read, study for yourself and with your fellow Christians, and marvel at the entire message of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. What a marvelous transformation came over the disciples and Saul who became Paul. From being unlearned, tongue-tied fishermen the disciples became men able to speak in intelligible foreign languages "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11); from being timid, fearful souls who had

forsaken Jesus and fled, they became men who rejoiced that they "were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41), even to the point of suffering martyrdom (Acts 8:54ff, 12:2ff); from being cowardly men who had hidden behind closed doors for fear, they became men who could "not but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20), regardless of life-threatening decrees from enemies of the Gospel; from being men who had once persecuted, imprisoned and even killed Christians (Acts 8:1ff, 9:1ff), they became men who witnessed to Christ from behind prison doors (Acts 16:25ff); from being men who had once been prejudiced against non-Jews, they became men anxious to proclaim the Gospel to black Ethiopians (Acts 8:26ff), superstitious Athenians (Acts 17), idol-worshipping Ephesians (Acts 19) and Roman governors and kings (Acts chapters 24-26).

Dear reader, the same Holy Spirit of God (again: a Person, not a feeling) is with us today. It is He who has made us what we are—children of God born anew to a living hope! That same Holy Spirit desires to make God's children today the same fearless confessors of, and confident witnesses to, Jesus Christ in the twentieth century AD that the apostles were in the first century BC. Let there be no question about it: Whatever you lack as a witness to your Savior, the Holy Spirit (alone) can supply it!

The author of "The Master Plan of Evangelism" summarizes

what we are trying to say: "Well intended ceremonies, programs, organizations, commissions, and crusades of human ingenuity are trying valiantly to do a job that only can be done by men in the power of the Holy Spirit... This is the new evangelism we need. It's not better methods, but better men."

John Wesley is supposed to have said: "Give me 300 men who fear no one but God, hate nothing but sin, and know nothing but Christ crucified, and the world would be set on fire."

And with all this, that CLC pastor was not far from the truth who, in connection with a topic on Christian evangelism, closed his presentation with these words: "And one thing more - stay out of the way of the Holy Spirit!"

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Chapter ten

EVANGELISM - How? Part III

In seeking to give helpful information on how to evangelize we have thus far given little by way of the practical, choosing rather to recall the examples left us by the Holy Spirit from the life of Jesus in the Gospels and from the apostles in the book of Acts. Hopefully, these divinely inspired examples have helped to inspire us.

When it comes to evangelistic methods, those we can learn from the Scriptures and from experience in the history of the Church do not fit nicely into any one package, format, or blueprint. Instead they vary. And finally, any method that God is pleased to use to spread His Good News will be a good method.

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To say this, however, does not exclude the possibility of improving our way of going about witnessing to our Savior and His

Gospel. In the last chapter we stressed the need to "stay out of the way of the Holy Spirit" whose work it is, finally, to bring anyone to saving faith in Christ. The implication is that we do, too often, get in the way.

Many lists have been drawn up of the do's and don'ts for effective personal evangelism and we hesitate to draw up another. Yet there are some basic points that might be suggested and kept in mind to minimize our interference with the Holy Ghost in this vital work.

Be prayerful

Since it is God the Holy Ghost who must give you the courage and the words to speak, and since it is He who must use your witness to move hearts, how can you expect to be "success-

ful" without imploring His blessing upon your witnessing?

Be sincere

Those whom you hope to win for Christ will hardly be impressed if you project a flippant attitude. You do not want to leave the impression that the Savior you love and serve has little more to offer than can be found in the fly-by-night false prophets and religious cults abounding in the world. You will want the person to know that you have a wonderful message—the most wonderful of all—to tell. You will want it understood that you have an earnest life-and-death message in your heart as well as on your lips.

Be natural

In a previous chapter it was said that "doing what comes naturally" is one good way to answer the "How?" of Evangelism for "there simply is no formal technique or program that can be substituted for having men and women whose hearts are wholly consecrated by, and dedicated to, Jesus Christ and His Gospel."

But here we would underscore: be yourself. Be genuine. Don't try to be somebody or something you aren't. Remember that as far as yourself or the other person is concerned, when the Holy Spirit creates Christians He has as many molds as God the Father has in creating people! Each of us is a distinct person and personality who is not to be forced into becoming a "carbon copy" (for example, a "CLC Lutheran").

Be positive

It seems the reverse of this is a trait that gets in the Spirit's way more often than not for us conservative Lutheran Christians. The "negative image" haunts us (maybe not always our fault?). Yet to offset this image, pray the Holy Spirit that He keep uppermost in your mind and heart the glories of the Gospel you are for. The Spirit in His time and way will show how to convince the person concerning things which true followers of Christ must naturally also be against.

Be sympathetic

Being a witness for Christ does not mean one must do all the talking! Ask questions which lead the person to "open up" about his or her feelings or beliefs on religion or spiritual matters. If these feelings or beliefs aren't "Christian" or "Biblical," accept the fact that they are nevertheless the person's feelings or beliefs. By careful listening, the Holy Spirit will guide you as to how to sympathetically but firmly change the person's heart with the life-altering, mind-changing Gospel message. (Restudy the Savior's sympathetic listening, but firm and loving responses, to the Samaritan woman in John, chapter 4.)

Be tactful

This follows closely on the above, and possibly ought to stand at the head of the list. Nothing gets in the way of the Holy Spirit's working quite as much or as easily as a lack of tact. "Tact" is defined as "knowing the right thing to say or do without offending" another. As vital as this trait is in commercial and political diplomacy, it is all the more so when you hope to "sell" someone on the glories of the Gospel.

What we refer to as "tact" in Gospel witnessing is self-defined by the Spirit when He speaks of always being ready to give answer to the hope that is in you "with meekness and reverence" (I Peter 3:15). And when He says: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6). Reverent and seasoned speech is a Spirit-given trait. Pray for it!

Be courteous

If genuine love, kindness, and gentleness mark one's approach in witnessing to others, an open, two way conversation will much more likely result than if one comes on too strong.

Be patient

No one can be forced or driven to Christ, only drawn and led (not the Law but the Gospel changes the heart). This is seldom

accomplished in one sitting. Never forget: "God's mills grind slowly but surely." The Holy Spirit through the Word is the converting force. You are but His instrument. Leave the person's making a "decision for Christ" up to the Spirit. Do not seek to coerce a life commitment to Christ. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 12:3).

Other observations

In an essay on evangelism to the 1982 CLC Convention Pastor Arvid Gullerud expanded on some of the above thoughts. For example, "The right to talk intimately to another person about the Lord Jesus Christ has to be earned, and you earn it by convincing him that you are his friend and really care about him. The indiscriminate buttonholing, the intrusive barging into the privacy of other people's souls, the thick-skinned insistence on expounding the things of God to reluctant strangers who are longing to get away—these modes of behavior should be written off as a travesty of personal evangelism... One of my Jewish friends told me that he had been completely turned off from Christianity by this type of evangelism that was practiced by 'Crusaders for Christ' on a university campus."

"Barging and buttonholing" is another way we might get in the way of the Holy Spirit and thus hinder rather than advance the cause of the Gospel.

Yet, as great and real as that danger is, there is still another. That is the hiding of our Christian light under a bushel basket of excuses whereby we seek to justify our failures to seize opportunities for witnessing. One Christian convert made this observation: "I lived to be almost 24 years old in America without being a Christian and never, ever, had anyone spoken to me about Christ. Never! If I ever met a Christian it was a well-guarded secret. We should have guarded the atomic bomb secrets half as well as all the Christians I met kept the secret of their Christianity."

Christian reader, "God so loved the world..." is no secret! "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations..." "Ye are My witnesses..." "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you..."

EVANGELISM RESULTS

It is only natural for us to look for results from our efforts at evangelizing, spreading God's Good News about the Savior. Yet when we do so, we must be careful lest we harbor false or misleading ideas about such results. In this concluding article in our evangelism series we have some things we want to say about the results of our witnessing to Jesus.

Results guaranteed

There is biblical basis for saying that results are guaranteed whenever the Word of God is spoken. Through the prophet Isaiah, God Himself promises: "My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is. 55:11). There is nothing on this earth as powerful and penetrating as is the Word of the living God. Confer Heb. 4:12.

Since God has given His Word for the express purpose of saving souls (2 Tim. 3:15; Js. 1:21) and since we know it is God's good pleasure that all men be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4), we have reason to expect that whenever God's Word is spoken faithfully, it will be used by the Holy Spirit to create, nourish, and strengthen faith in the hearer. How this fact ought to encourage us in our witnessing to Jesus. What other occupation in this world has an absolute guarantee of success even before the work is begun?

As true as this is, however, this does not mean that the results will always be immediate and positive. As earnest as is the Lord's desire to save sinners, He will not force anybody to believe. Man can, and more often than not does (Mt. 20:16), reject the Good News. The fault in such cases is not God's, but man's alone. It is due to man's hardness of heart by nature. "Ye would not" were the

weeping Savior's own words to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who rejected Him and His saving Gospel (Mt. 23:27). Also consider in this connection the martyr Stephen's closing words in the sermon he preached to the unbelieving Jews: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51).

Consider the Apostle Paul. He may rightly be called the greatest missionary who ever lived. He experienced the joy of gaining many converts to the faith. But Paul also experienced much animosity towards, and rejection of, the saving message, he preached. Therefore he wrote: "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life" (2 Cor. 2:14-16—NKJV). We will become disillusioned and easily discouraged if we expect our witnessing always to bear immediate and positive results. Even if our evangelistic methods or techniques are most polished and skillful, our efforts will not always bear positive fruit.

The Lord adds to His Church

It is not for us to worry about the results of our witness. As God's spokesmen, we are and remain but the instruments through whom the Holy Ghost seeks to do His gracious work in the hearts of men. Let's leave the fruits, the results, up to Him.

The first Christian congregation, founded on the day of Pentecost, is an example for us here. Peter had preached a sermon which the Spirit used to bring 3,000 souls to faith. These Christians practiced and lived their faith openly before others. The Spirit used their faithful witness, by word and deed, to enlarge the number of believers, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47—NKJV). Some came to saving faith. Others did not. So it will be in our case. It is purely and simply our Christian calling and privilege to be busy about spreading the Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation

to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

One writer comments that faithful witnesses to Christ have the privilege of watching "predestination at work." It is a point well made. We know without a doubt that every one of God's chosen elect will be eternally saved (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). We also know sadly that those who harden their hearts to the Gospel message will be eternally lost. But since only "the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19), we dare not enter the business of seeking to decide which are the saved and which are the lost. Rather, as opportunity presents itself, we owe to each and every one of our fellowmen a clear testimony to the Savior's saving work and Word, unless and until they reject it outright. Confer Mt. 7:6 and Mt. 10:1 ff.

"All Heaven in an uproar"

The story is told of a young pastor whose turn came to report to his fellow pastors on the work he did in the mission field the past year. When it came time to report on the visible results of his missionary work, the pastor said, "I regret to report that I have only one convert to report this year." From the back of the hall came this response from an obviously more experienced voice: "Young man, if you had even one convert this year you had all heaven in an uproar."

Whether it actually happened or not, this story contains much food for thought. The older pastor had scriptural basis for his remark in the Savior's words: "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Lk. 15:10).

Let us not succumb to judging whether our evangelistic efforts are successful by playing the "numbers game" as many of the media evangelists do today. Granted, the Holy Spirit can convert, and has converted, a multitude of souls all at once, as, for example, on Pentecost. Yet the fact remains that this is the exception rather than the rule. And if we succeed in gaining only

one soul for Christ, all the angels of heaven rejoice!

The earthly ministry of our Lord, as well as of Paul and the other apostles, appears to have been most "successful" following one-on-one witnessing. And think of what one converted soul can do to advance the kingdom of Christ. The Samaritan woman whom Jesus brought to faith led many others to believe through her witness (Jn. 4:9-42). Peter, brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew, became God's chosen vessel to carry the Gospel to the Jews. The desperate, lonely soul, Saul, became Paul, God's chosen missionary to the Gentile world. Who knows how many other spiritually hungry, thirsting souls were brought to Jesus through the faithful witness of converts to the faith such as the Ethiopian eunuch, the Roman centurion, the jailer of Philippi, Cornelius, Lydia, Aquilla and Priscilla, and countless others.

We can't help but think of the wonderful fruits of the witness borne to Jesus and His Word by individual Christians within our church body. Some years ago through the faithful testimony of Oscar Erpenstein of San Francisco and John Rohrbach of Ipswich, South Dakota, the Lord opened doors to us for foreign mission work in Nigeria and India. Who knows what the Lord might do through our witness-bearing? Only let us be alert to entering the doors He opens for us to tell others of Him and His saving truth.

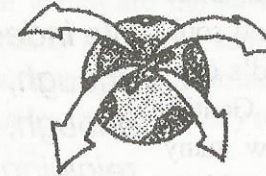
The cause of rejoicing

But with all this, we return to the words of caution given

*We indeed have
enough, more than
enough, cause for
rejoicing in the blessed
fact that we
ourselves—lost and
condemned sinners
that we are by
nature—have sought
out, found, and saved
by the Lord Jesus.*

earlier. *We dare not allow our Christian joy to depend on what we see or don't see as visible results of our efforts at spreading God's Gospel.* When the seventy disciples whom Jesus had sent out as His witnesses returned, full of joy because of the apparent visible, positive, and immediate results of their labors, the Lord told them, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20).

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Evangelism

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also be overflowing

Fellow believers, called to be Jesus' witnesses to a sin-sick, dying world, rejoice because your names are written in heaven! With that spirit of deep joy and rejoicing in your heart, you will be as determined as were Peter and John when they, even in the face of persecution, exclaimed: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Let none hear you idly saying
"There is nothing I can do"
While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for you.
Take the task He gives you gladly
Let His work your pleasure be
Answer quickly when He calleth
"Here am I send me, send me."

The Lutheran Hymnal 496:4