

A Manner Worthy of the Gospel: The Question of Quality in Our Work of Evangelism

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"...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

—Philippians 1:27a, NIV

It has been said, only half-jokingly, that the defining principle for all practices, programs, and policies in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod was for many — both inside and outside — the scriptural injunction, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40, KJV) . On the surface, there certainly have been reasons to make that observation: a structured, formal worship service; comprehensive, enumerated doctrinal statements; set procedures for beginning new churches, proposing new projects or ventures, calling workers, etc.; and a seemingly monolithic church culture that made even our differences fit within predetermined categories or classifications. Perhaps there was a certain "Prussian-ness" that came into our church body from its German roots, maybe it was a reaction against the loose and untidy liberalism against which we have fought, maybe it was a retreat into a comfortable traditionalism — but maybe the perception of ubiquitous unity and order is much stronger than the reality.¹

The one distinctive quality of the WELS that all can agree on is its insistence on complete, deliberate, and heartfelt unity in doctrine; no teaching of Scripture is insignificant or disposable, and neither biblical interpretation nor theological expression is ever to be careless or slipshod. We all agree that this is the way things should be — the way God wants it, the way Scripture demands it. Yet this concern and striving for perfection in doctrine has not always transferred over to other important matters that Christ has entrusted to his church.

Most notable of these exceptions to the aim for excellence has often been outreach (although this is steadily improving in many places throughout the synod). Whether we ascribe this tendency to poor education, apathy, lack of practice, cultural inertia, or even indolence, the fact remains that our outreach efforts as a synod and as congregations have frequently fallen flat due to a lack of quality in their execution. Our churches have lost eager and evangelistic members who were frustrated not just with inattention to the lost but also with inattention to detail, and who can say how many prospects have not heard the gospel for the same reasons? While attitudes and conditions vary from congregation to congregation, both statistical and anecdotal evidence show that more needs to be done with evangelism, and both our love for God and our understanding of his Word show that what is done needs to be done well.

While few members of the WELS would ever disagree with that assessment, explaining it and putting it into practice are another matter. It's important to understand what it means to do evangelism well, and it's important to know what excellence in outreach can and should look like. To that end, let us turn to God's Word to uncover the basis for quality-conscious outreach, and then use the principles we find to evaluate our congregational witness and ministry — so that we might be effective evangelists, and that we might "conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27).

¹ Indeed, a look at synodical history occasionally shows an unfortunate failure to act in decent order or in proper unity; most Wisconsin Synod churches did not have true liturgical worship until the mid-20th century; and many of the rules and procedures now in place were established precisely because of disorderly problems and confusion that developed before they existed.

The Scriptural Basis for Quality

What exactly does that mean, "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"? Paul's instruction seems simple enough, but much of the rest of Philippians is taken up with his illustrating what such conduct looks like. Nevertheless, we can understand Paul's meaning by with a simple consideration of the individual elements of the sentence (for the sake of logical progression, we will treat them in reverse order).

"Christ"

This reminds us Who this is all about, to Whom we belong and Whose name we bear, to Whom we are trying to point people: Christ our Savior. His love, grace, and work is the basis of all we do.

We remember also that Christ is God — a God of quality and perfection, whose very nature necessitates perfection in his creation and in his creatures. At the Creation we read “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31, NIV). At Cana Jesus provided not passable or adequate wine, but the very best (John 2:10). In the prophetic visions of Revelation, Daniel and Ezekiel we see a heaven filled only with perfect things. Such unblemished excellence is clearly also his intention for his people (and the purpose of his justifying work) — “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48, NIV) and “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4, NIV).

In addition, when we keep this in mind we are reminded that the message we are sharing comes from and belongs not to us, but to Christ — it's God's good news. Our aim and desire is not that people see us but that they see Him. We evangelize not to fill our churches or to do a duty, but to bring God glory. “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:5,6, NIV).

"The Gospel"

The article is significant here — this is a definite, specific gospel that we share. There are no options or varieties or mistakes or fakes allowed, because there is only one true gospel, and it belongs to God, not us. We dare not allow the quality of the good news with which we reach out to be corrupted or watered down, since it is no longer Christ's gospel, and is without his power, when the message of justification by grace through faith has been diluted or adulterated. We have been instructed to teach "all things" (Matthew 28:19-20), not just some things.

When naming the gospel we also recognize it as the Lord's chosen and only means of grace. Through it we are called by the Holy Spirit to faith in Christ, and without it we can never reach heaven. “... A different gospel ... is really no gospel at all” (Galatians 1:6,7, NIV).

Now while we recognize that the unchurched only come to believe the gospel of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit — "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3, NIV) — still we also realize that we have been given the privilege and responsibility of serving as God's messengers and witnesses throughout our communities and the world. We are what people see and hear — as his honored emissaries we represent Christ as best we can to those who do not yet know him — “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20, NIV).

Here it is also helpful to remember that "the sinful mind is hostile to God" (Romans 8:7, NIV). For all the times that we, as confessional Lutherans, affirm that faith comes from the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, and not from anything inside people, many of us still seem to expect unbelievers to come to hear the gospel just because we put a sign in front of our church and open our doors. A "they know where to find us" approach to evangelism is most definitely not in keeping with — "worthy of" — the gospel we know and love. As Paul and the other apostles actively sought out opportunities to "preach Christ crucified", we too must be creative, diligent and thorough, in order that this "stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" might rather reach as many as possible and be "to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23,24 NIV).

"Worthy of"

This concept needs little explanation. The term "worthy" here means "in keeping with, suitable, in line with," etc. We recognize that the gospel of Christ is deserving of our best efforts to spread its message and therefore we will strive to keep all of our evangelistic efforts in line with, and suitable to, both the glorious good news of salvation and the gracious Savior who obtained it for us.

In this we have abundant biblical examples to look to — not just the preaching and work of Paul and the other apostles as they built the Church, but even the building projects of the Old Testament. Noah built his ark with great attention to detail, in keeping with what God said. The children of Israel made the tabernacle and all its furnishings with the best of materials and in line with God's directions. To the glory of God, Solomon built the temple with the best of the best — Lebanese cedar, gold, precisely cut stone, intricate design — and for God's worship he provided instruments and trained musicians to lead the people in his father David's psalms of praise.

"Conduct yourselves in a manner"

The Greek verb here indicates a continuous, habitual action. We are to behave at all times in a manner that is in keeping with the gospel we have learned and which brings glory to Christ the Author of that gospel (the description of God's people as "ambassadors" is again appropriate here).

More than just right actions and behavior, however, these words encourage us to exhibit even right attitudes by speaking of the "manner" in which we are to live our lives. Hearts which share God's concern for the lost and which truly want to bring glory to God will "put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:12, NIV). Such conduct will allow neither ignorance nor arrogance, neither apathy nor misguided zeal, neither inactivity nor overexertion to put obstacles in the way of anyone's hearing or understanding the gospel message. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand the link between Christian living and witness: "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders" (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12a, NIV).

Another reminder is in order here — we cannot produce this attitude or even this "conduct" on our own. These are changes that are effected in us by the Holy Spirit working through the very gospel we work to spread. Evangelism in obedience to the Lord's command falls within the third use of the law, not the first — we go forth in love, gratitude, excitement and joy because of the forgiveness of our sins; we do not go out as grudging workers pressured to meet the demands of an impossible code of conduct. Thus our outreach efforts, as part of our lives of sanctification, are something that we — as individuals and as congregations — will always and eagerly strive to do better and make more perfect.

Where sanctification is at hand, stewardship follows closely, and that is certainly true of our evangelism as well. Which resources a church devotes to outreach can be as important as how many — are they firstfruits or leftovers when the budget is put together? The example of the Israelites in bringing only sacrifices "without defect or blemish"² should also inspire us to put forth our best as we offer God our obedience to the Great Commission. Similarly, a proper understanding and appreciation of members' spiritual gifts will mean that they are put to their best use, rather than being neglected, misdirected, or forced into unsuitable roles. "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops" (Proverbs 3:9, NIV).

Conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ means, then, that we strive not just for adequacy but for excellence, to the glory of God who created all things good and who gave us salvation. It means that we remember that there is only one gospel and that it belongs to God — we will work to always present it in its truth and purity, and we will trust that the Holy Spirit will work through the gospel to bring unbelievers to faith.

This conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel also means that everything we do will be in keeping with who God is, what he has done for us, and who we are because of that. We will live our lives, think our thoughts and speak our speech — both carefully and joyfully — in order that the message of forgiveness be well-presented — without hindrance and as the glorious good news that it is. God's Word, therefore, encourages us to be conscious of quality in all our evangelism.

Quality-Conscious Evangelism

But what does such quality-conscious evangelism look like? How do we know if our outreach efforts are striving for excellence or selling the gospel short? We recognize that Scripture has set no measurable standards for quality within the church or for its work, so we can really only ask, "Are we doing the best that we can?" Perhaps the best way to determine the quality of our evangelism is to consider all the various areas and aspects of our outreach and evaluate them one by one.

Much of what follows is really just common sense and requires no scientific surveys or sociological studies. Common sense, but not commonly considered — things exist as they are, as they have always been done, and what may have been excellent and appropriate in another time or place has become inadequate or unattractive.

Sometimes a problem can be traced to people who have low standards, e.g. for excellence in music, for cleanliness, for behavior, etc., who do not understand — and perhaps really cannot understand — people who have high standards in those areas. This is often a result of experiences (or lack of them) rather than anything deliberate. For instance, a pioneer farmer whose home was built out of logs, with any holes being patched with mud and moss, would probably fail to see the importance of measurements precise to the millimeter or the need for square corners of exactly 90°, and that would be fine for him and maybe for his family. Yet if he were to take a job in the city putting up a multi-story building, those precise measurements would cease to be simply a matter of personal preference — they would become standards of right and wrong, good and bad. Those who feel that "what's always been done here" will always be appropriate for outreach, or who say, "it worked for me, it'll work for everyone", may similarly find themselves out of line with what is truly needed for building the kingdom.

² Cf. Lev. 22:21, Num. 19:2,, Eph. 5:27, Col. 1:22, and 1 Peter 1:19.

Our Public Image

Perhaps the first and easiest aspect of outreach to consider is public image — how do non-members see our congregation? This can be determined by speaking to prospects, visitors and various people "around town," but can often be evaluated simply by putting oneself in the shoes of "Unchurched Harry" (or Mary) and asking some pointed questions.

First, consider the church property itself. Is the lawn mowed? Are the hedges trimmed? Is the paint peeling? Has the snow been shoveled off the walk? Does it look like someone really cares about the appearance of the church?

Inside, ask similar questions. What kind of shape are the floors and walls in? Is the lighting inside the sanctuary good enough to see by, and does the sound system work well? If someone has to get up to visit the restroom, is it easy to find? How about the nursery, or the Sunday School rooms, or the church office? Does the altar look like "holy ground" — a place of respect and awe and intercession, or is it just a glorified hymnal and prayerbook stand? Does the temperature inside inadvertently indicate a lack of concern for people's comfort — perhaps from a desire to save money? Even little things, like missing pieces from the jigsaw puzzle or 25 year old toys in the cry room or nursery can communicate a lack of concern. Will the unbeliever sense "we do what we have to" or "we do whatever we can" with regard to the physical appearance and maintenance of the church?

If our church has an adjustable sign, is the message changed every week, or are the Lenten services still advertised in the middle of June? If it's a permanent sign, do all the letters match, or are there some cheaper, temporary (?!) letters giving the name of the current pastor? Similar concerns apply to a church web site — are the pages regularly updated, or is "last week's sermon" really from last year?

Public image is not just about visible things, however. What kind of reputation does our church have in the community — and is it deserved? Are we almost apologetic about our positions and practice, do we "hide", or do we try to keep our congregation's witness in the public eye? Are our members hesitant or embarrassed to tell people where they go to church, or are they proud of us, and eager to invite others? When our sports teams — from our school, or in a men's softball league — play, do others notice anything different about them, or is their attitude and behavior just like that of every other team?

Perhaps the congregation needs to get more involved in those community activities which do not involve fellowship issues — parades, county fairs, holiday festivities, etc. Maybe the pastor could write a column for the local newspaper or appear on radio; perhaps he needs to stop refusing every invitation strictly out of habit and actually attend some functions, dinners, or meetings that can improve the congregation's visibility in the community. Are we settling for mediocrity, isolation, or anonymity, or are we making a quality effort to promote our church as a place to hear the message of law and gospel?

Our Intentional Outreach Efforts

Related to public image, but impacting on people more personally, is any planned or organized evangelism work the church is doing (if there are no such efforts, there is definitely a quality issue involved!). Since this is the area where the spread of the gospel is done most openly and directly, the question of quality is probably most critical here.

One of the most public outreach activities that a congregation can sponsor is a neighborhood canvass; yet so much attention is often paid to preparing material and recruiting canvassers that issues of quality are often neglected. Door hangers can be only so much litter if they are not affixed firmly and unobtrusively; even if the material is taken inside and read, a

poorly produced or overly general tract will not often attract the unchurched to an event or congregation.

Canvassers and callers, too, need to be friendly, not frightened; and respectful — of people's time, privacy, property, and activities. Also, while advertising "No training needed!" may help recruit warm bodies, the intense, and possibly invasive witness that a canvass or neighborhood outreach presents suggests that perhaps some instruction and preparation are called for. Even pastors and "regular" evangelism callers should periodically evaluate their witness to make sure they are presenting the gospel in the best light and manner that they can.

In this age of high tech media, congregations also need to approach advertising carefully. Radio or TV ads — even if produced by the synod — each need to be evaluated for quality and type of production as well as content: Do we want to be classified with the car dealer's homemade commercials? With the political campaign ads? With the beer promotions? With the station's obligatory public service announcements? If we cannot afford or produce quality materials in media campaigns, that say what we want to say, it is often better and wiser to remain silent rather than risk packaging the gospel in an unattractive vessel. In the same way, quality in our printed material requires careful editing and proofreading — while poor spellers may not see the importance of misplaced punctuation or unclear grammar, such errors can be an obstacle to teachers, journalists, professionals, etc. who place great value on quality in the written word.

Our intentional outreach programs also need to be relevant. Too many well-intentioned Lutherans have lumped attempts to meet the specific needs of the unchurched in our specific communities together with "church growth", results-oriented, "felt needs" approaches. This is unfortunate, and again denies the important scriptural truth that we cannot expect spiritual behavior of unspiritual people. A concern with quality in evangelism will lead a congregation to make sure that its programs are seen to be relevant while still directing people into the study of God's Word. A special program or course on "Raising Children with Positive Values" may draw interested parents into a church, but if the community has few children, or if the presentation fails to involve law and gospel, the program needs to be reconsidered or abandoned.

Our Worship

Many of our outreach efforts focus on getting prospects to come to church — but what do they witness when they come there? Given that our worship is the most regular public display of our faith our churches have, it is sad how little attention is sometimes paid to quality.

While some Lutherans fear that paying too much concern for quality in worship will result in a "professionalization" that puts the focus on the service itself instead of on its message, a proper understanding of and attention to quality can actually help keep the focus on Christ and ensure proper use of Scripture, proper preaching of law and gospel, etc. This can happen simply because worship becomes something planned with the intention of presenting the message in the best possible way.

A visitor's worship experience usually begins with his or her entry into the church. What atmosphere will he find there? Warm, friendly, inviting — or something else? Is he greeted or ignored? Will he know where to sit or where to find a hymnal? Will some longtime members glare at him and his family for sitting in "their" pew? Does anyone smile before, during, or after the service — or is the atmosphere more funereal?

What will the bulletin tell the visitor? Will he find all the information there that he needs for the service? Alternatively, will it tell him far more than he would ever want to know about the congregation ("We are \$20,000 behind budget this year." "We still need volunteers to help clean out the septic tank next Saturday." "Ezra Rosenbaum was excommunicated last week for failing to attend church regularly.")? Did anyone bother to proofread it, or will it provide someone with some more good "bulletin bloopers" to pass around the internet?

Despite the claims of those who promote contemporary worship as the best means to church growth, to the visitor, the "style" of worship might very well be less important than how it is done. Excellence leaves an impression — so does mediocrity, but that will not likely attract the unspiritual. If a congregation's worship is liturgical, they should be careful to (using James Tiefel's phrase) "do the rite thing for the right reason." Similarly, the pastor's attitude and "performance" (which is how it will be seen by the unchurched) need to demonstrate a concern for doing things well. Fumbling through the hymnal, searching for words or running on auto-pilot, burying one's head in a book or manuscript, projecting professionalism instead of sincerity, irrelevant or out-of-touch sermons, even poorly improvised *ex corde* prayers — these can all give a visitor the impression that worship is not really taken seriously in this church.

After the pastor's "performance," the next biggest component of the visitor's worship experience is the music. Some congregations are blessed with wonderful musicians and can do beautiful things in the service — let them praise God with their excellence. Many churches, however, are not so blessed. This does not mean that since they cannot achieve excellence that they should be unconcerned with quality; rather, it means that they should do the best they can with what they have been given. A pastor will not expect or ask too much of his musicians, nor will an organist, choir, vocalist, or instrumentalist be given free rein to attempt pieces that are beyond his or her skills; rather, while encouraged toward improvement, all worshippers will be edified through simpler music done with competence.

Our Witness

Up to this point we have dealt with the impressions given by our public, active, outward activities and work. Now we turn to a discussion of the message itself — how our witness is received and perceived by the unchurched. This is perhaps the easiest area for WELS pastors to assess, since there is a definite, universal standard to measure by: the Word of God. Still, it is both helpful and necessary to periodically evaluate our church's witness.

First, we must ask whether the message of law and gospel, sin and grace, is clearly communicated — not just in our sermons, but in our worship, our printed materials, even the signs in front of our churches. We should also judge our consistency and sincerity — do we show that we care? Is the gospel real to us? Do we practice what we preach (even if it's not popular or politically correct)? Are we ready to give the answers when people question or challenge our faith? Do we present a positive message to the world, or are we more concerned with polemics — pointing out the errors of others when we could be pointing people to salvation? Is the gospel presented as a reason for hope and joy, or do we sell it short?

Pastors and churches should also take a look at individual, personal witness — do our members actually witness? Do they know how? Are they properly motivated? How clearly and well can they present law and gospel? On the other hand, do those of our members who actively witness give the appearance of insincerity — can they be accused of false friendships, faked interest in their "prospects," etc.? Or do our members show a serious faith-life disconnect — is their interest in evangelism accompanied by a concern for "quality" in sanctified living?

Our Instruction

A more comprehensive aspect of our congregation's witness is its program of Christian education. The most obvious connection between teaching and evangelism is, of course, the Bible Information Class. Here our concern for excellence will lead us to regularly evaluate the quality of our teaching and materials, the times and length of courses, the seriousness or sincerity with which we treat the subject matter, how we treat people, etc.

The other educational programs of our congregation also deserve frequent evaluation — particularly those that serve children. A common problem in many WELS congregations is confusion over the focus of the Vacation Bible School: is it designed to serve the children of the congregation, or is it primarily an outreach program directed at the unchurched? This needs to be addressed and decided or else the VBS will be less than it could be — either a program that goes over the heads of the unchurched or one that bores the children of the congregation with basic truths and stories that they have already learned in day school or Sunday School. Attention also needs to be paid to the quality of the materials and instruction — are teachers talented and trained, or did we just take whomever volunteered? Do the lesson materials and projects inspire, challenge and teach, or do they insult the intelligence of the children?

The primary purpose of the Sunday School should also be examined — is it an appropriate tool for the congregation's outreach? If so, have the teachers been properly prepared? Has the program been optimized for the convenience of unchurched parents or simply done "the way it's always been done"? Is the Sunday School treated, in regard to budget and congregational attention, as a poor stepsister to the Christian day school?

If a church has a day school, has the congregation fully considered if and how the school can be used as an outreach tool? Without a definite plan or policy, unchurched parents who are interested in sending their children to the school might find frustration with confusing requirements, unwritten expectations, and perhaps even decidedly unevangelistic attitudes from other parents (e.g. "I sent my boy to a Christian school to keep him away from kids like that — why let them in here?!").

Even our adult education program should be looked at in regard to the quality of its witness. Would a visitor reading the Sunday bulletin see that the adults are offered relevant and meaningful courses for study? Would someone seeking a church home find the Bible class interesting, challenging, edifying, or exciting? Do the materials used show an attention to quality and detail, or have they been slapped together by a pastor strapped for time?

One other matter should also be examined in regard to the outreach value of our Christian education programs: what is the attitude of our members toward them? Parents who choose not to send their children to VBS, Sunday School or a day school are not very likely to encourage friends and neighbors to do so. Why is this? How can it be changed? In the same way, members who do not attend adult Bible classes will not be bringing guests to those classes. Sometimes we need to convince our own members of the quality and value of our education programs before we can effectively promote them as outreach tools.

Caveats and Qualifications

"Quality" does not necessarily mean uniformity. The difference between excellence and mediocrity, in any application, will vary from time to time, from people to people, from place to place.

This becomes particularly apparent as we reach out in different cultural and regional settings, and we need to be sensitive to the perceptions of the community we are trying to reach. In some places, "high church" liturgical worship might be perceived as "poor," no matter how well it is done, simply because it is so far out of touch with what that community wants. In other places, "low church" or contemporary worship could be considered as a sell-out, evidence that a congregation or pastor really doesn't know what it's doing. Similarly, a farming community's idea of great musical skill might not be the same as that of an urban community's, and the use of music and musicians in churches will vary accordingly in those places.

Culture will have obvious impacts on our approach to evangelism everywhere — we should consider things like language, income, ethnic origin, educational levels, family situations

any time we reach out to a community. We need to be careful, however, that we do not assume that "different" or "less educated" somehow allows us to lower our commitment to quality — what we do might change, but not our attitude (and we should never assume what we do not know!).

We will find, however, that some questions or "quality" are not as "clear cut" as we would like. For instance, in some communities casual dress for worship would indicate a lack of seriousness in what we are doing; in other places such clothes would show that we are serious about being in touch with the community and do not want to be stiff, formal, or stand-offish. Again, when going into areas new to us, but even in reaching out to areas we think we understand, we should be careful not to assume that we know what appeals to the unchurched or tells them that we have a message worth their hearing.

Finally, we should also be prepared for the times when our quality slips. Even with the best of plans and preparations, mistakes are made and accidents happen. Unbelievers understand this too — but how we deal with our errors will make a significant impression on them. "Goofing up in a manner worthy of the gospel" sounds rather contradictory (and we cannot exactly refer to any example of Christ, since he made no mistakes!), but we also demonstrate quality with Christian humility — owning up to our errors, asking for forgiveness when appropriate, and recognizing our own imperfections. Sometimes this even involves humor — showing that we do not take ourselves too seriously can actually strengthen our witness to the unbeliever, since it shows a sincerity and honesty often lacking in the world around us. Regardless, these are the situations in which we gladly remember that conversion is the Spirit's work and responsibility, not ours. We retain our commitment to quality-conscious evangelism, but we place all our efforts in God's hands, and leave the results to him.

Concluding Thoughts

If high quality were easy to achieve, there would be no need to work toward it — it would be the normal and expected state of things. It is effort that makes the difference, and quality in our outreach will require effort on the part of pastors, congregations, and church members. This starts with evaluation, includes a lot of continuing education, and eventually leads to action — all of which is based on a proper motivation, that of the gospel of Christ, the love of Whom compels every aspect of our sanctified living.

Yes, it is work, and there may even be some pain as we grope and strive toward doing the work of evangelists with a clear commitment to quality. But if we understand the plight of the lost, if we comprehend the value of the salvation that has been won for us, if we wish to serve our Lord, and if we want nothing to hinder us in proclaiming his gospel to all who need it, we will not hesitate to present our best and try our hardest. It is what God wants, it is what we want — in all things, we will strive and work and struggle to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel.