

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Becoming All Things to All Men

By Joe R. Price

The apostle Paul wrote,

“19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; 22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you” (1 Cor. 9:19–23, NKJV).

Paul willingly served others to advance the prospect of their salvation (1 Cor. 9:22). He did this by relinquishing personal rights and privileges to improve his access to those who needed the gospel he preached (1 Cor. 9:15; 2 Cor. 11:7-9). He did this by giving up personal liberties to protect the weak in conscience from sin (1 Cor. 8:7-13). Foregoing personal liberties, and using personal liberties to advance the gospel and salvation, is what it means to *“become all things to all men.”* Doing so demands discernment (Phil. 1:9-11).

Becoming all things to all men does not mean compromising truth and righteousness to accomplish a godly goal. Doing evil that good may come is not the Lord’s will; The end does not justify the means (Rom. 3:8). It is worldly thinking that says the way to win souls for Christ is to remain silent about the sinner’s sin, instead of exposing it (Eph. 5:11; 2 Jno. 9-11).

How can we tell the difference (1 Thess. 5:21-22)? How do we become *“all things to all men?”* The answer is found in the nature of the activity in question, and in the association it produces. Is the activity sin? If so, we cannot participate in it (Rom. 12:9; 1 Jn. 3:4). Is the activity morally acceptable, yet, does engaging in it show allegiance to, and encouragement of, sinners in their sin? If so, we cannot participate (1 Cor. 5:11-13; 15:33-34). Remember, we do not advance righteousness by violating God’s word.

Becoming all things to all men requires sacrificing self, and serving others (1 Cor. 9:19). It requires a humble heart, that considers others before itself (1 Cor. 9:20-22; Phil. 2:3-4). And, it requires the primacy of devotion to the gospel, and to its power to save (1 Cor. 9:23). – *The Spirit’s Sword*, January 7, 2018. ■

Clock Watch Worshipers

By Don R. Hastings

I am a preacher who does not get his feelings hurt easily. It is advantageous for preachers to be “thick skinned.” It is good to let cutting remarks go in one ear and immediately out the other. Don’t let the insult lodge in your mind and you will find it easier for you to obey God’s precepts found in Ephesians 4:31, 32.

However, the persistent little jobs about preaching too long are making a sore spot on my “thick skin.” I know exactly how long I preach! I can read a clock. The watch on my wrist is not there just for decoration. I can see the clock in the back of the auditorium. I strongly detest clocks in the front of the auditorium or on the side wall near the front of the auditorium.

Am I preaching too long? What is too long? Will someone give us a short, but clear definitive answer? The apostle, Paul, a preacher whom all preachers should strive to imitate, *“prolonged his speech until midnight”* (Acts 20:7). Did he preach too long? Remember, Eutychus went to sleep during his sermon, *“fell down from the third story, and was taken*

up dead” (Acts 20:9). I know: I am not the apostle Paul; he left the next day; and I could not bring one back to life.

Paul was not a dynamic orator. He didn’t use **“persuasive words of wisdom”** (1 Cor. 2:4). His enemies said that **“his speech of no account”** (2 Cor. 10:10). If anyone complained that Paul, or any other preacher of the gospel, preached too long, it is not recorded in the Bible. It was a blessing that they didn’t have clocks or watches in their worship services. Do you think someone took a sun dial to the worship services and held it up for the preacher to see?

God is observing our worship of Him and He hears the numerous complaints about the worship service lasting too long. He knows the anger in the hearts of His children because the worship service lasted longer than one hour. With whom will, He find fault in the judgment day? This should be of great concern to all of us.

Will God find fault with the preacher who is: faithfully preaching the soul-saving gospel; speaking the truth in love; fervent and zealous in proclaiming his love for mankind; boldly defining what is sin and calling on sinners to repent; preaching His whole counsel; a diligent student of His word who delivers lessons that have been carefully thought out so the message is clear and true to the Book; preaching 40 to 45 minutes; etc.? The answer is an emphatic **“No!”** God will condemn the evangelist who is not doing **“the work of an evangelist”** (2 Tim. 4:5).

Will God find fault with the worshiper who is: worried about how many verses of a song are sung, how long the prayer lasts, how long it takes to partake of the Lord’s Supper, and how long the preacher preaches; fretting about eating lunch at one o’clock instead of twelve o’clock; anxious for services to be over so he, or she, can go visiting, watch ball games, go to work, take a nap, etc.; not hungering and thirsting after righteousness because of little spiritual appetite; not worshiping him with the whole heart for the body is present, but the mind is absent; etc.? The answer is an emphatic, **“Yes!”** (Amos 8:4-10). How can we think, that our worship of our Creator and Redeemer, is acceptable to him when we resent assembling with the saints to praise Him and study His word for more than the maximum 4 hours a week?

Our eyes should be filled with tears when we realize that our standard for determining the worth of a worship service is how long did it last! How sad that a gospel sermon is criticized if it lasts 40 minutes, or longer, but praised if the sermon is 30 minutes or shorter. Preachers are often held in contempt for being long-winded if they preach longer than 30 minutes and praised if they will **“boil”** the sermon down to 30 minutes or less.

God wants preachers to: **“suffer hardships;”** preach His word exactly like it is written; seek the lost; try to restore the erring; and practice what they preach. God wants His worshipers to worship Him **“in spirit and in truth”** (Jn. 4:23, 24). He wants them to be caught up in the acts of worship for they glorify and exalt Him and build up the faith of the worshipers. Heaven is a place where true worshipers will worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever. Will you be there? Do you want to be there? There will be no clocks in heaven! – **Truth Magazine**, November 5, 1992. ■

What’s The Difference?

- Between the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord’s church?
- Between the skeptic who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?
- Between those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?
- Between the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord’s church and the Christian who finds fault with others but does nothing himself?
- Between a man of the world and a person in the church who lives like a man in the world?
- Between a man of the world who lives for self and a person in the church building who lives for self, not God?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is, Christians make no *difference* until they are *different*. – **Selected** ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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