

WITH DISCRETION

“Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God - even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.” —1 CORINTHIANS 10:32-33

In our witness for Christ, it is wise to realize that it is much more difficult to unlearn and correct a wrong understanding than it is to learn something new. If an initial approach threatens what people hold dear, they instinctively fight to retain it. If, however, something positive and more attractive is made available, which does not seem to threaten what is already held, once the new has been embraced, the old begins to take on a different significance, and in due time falls away of its own accord.

As Paul’s experience had taught him, it was when he met with Christ and experienced a transformation of his own life that he began to see his Judaism in a new light, and could start to leave it behind. Prior to his encounter with Christ, any attempt to take away the demands of the law from him would have only resulted in its most severe defense. Paul’s ministry was one that respected what was meaningful to the people, while at the same time, finding a gateway that would lead them to the Gospel.

When Paul first revisited Jerusalem about three or four years after his conversion, he gained the trust of the disciples, and began preaching the Gospel. He then returned home to Tarsus, and was no

doubt welcomed back as the son of a respected Jewish family. He writes, “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law” (1 Corinthians 9:20). In Tarsus, Paul would not have flaunted his liberty in Christ. He would have lived as a Jew, and placed himself under the law, not as a means to salvation, but as a bridge over which he might travel to his fellow Jews.

In 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, Paul tells us “that everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial or constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.” There is freedom for believers in Christ, which others may not have, so we are to use discretion in what we can do and cannot do in their presence. In this way, we will not pose a stumbling block to the Gospel, but be a means of opening a doorway to it.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, in my witness for You, help me to realize and overcome anything that may be a deterrent in me for others. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I sensitive to the beliefs of others in my witness for Christ?