TO THE BAPTISTS

The subject assigned me is quite wicked. It runs as follows: Why I Am Glad I Am Not a Baptist. How can a speaker wax eloquent on such a subject as that. It may be an altogether false assumption. Of course, I naturally have my pet prejudices and am still smarting from a slander attributed to a Baptist minister of Oklahoma. This gentleman was having difficult with his congregation. It led to his getting two invitations—an invitation to a neighboring church, and an invitation to leave the one that he had. The whole matter gave him a headache.

So painful was this headache that he went to consult his physician. After a careful examination the physician said, "Your brain is out of fix. If you will leave it with me for a few days, I think I can straighten it out." "All right," said the minister. "Our Annual Convention is meeting in Oklahoma City. I'll just leave it with you while I attend the convention. I'll need it up there. A few of the leaders do all the thinking anyway—the Truitts and the Hewitts, the Dodds and the Scarboroughs. Of course, we are a thoroughly democratic church, we Baptists, but we are ruled by a few pious autocrats. Therefore, you may keep my brain while I as gone to the convention, but be sure to have it ready when I return, because as soon as I get back I intend to move and I should hate to go into my next appointment without my brain.

Fortified with the faithful promise of the physician that his brain would certainly be ready on time, the minister went up to the convention. But when he came back and phoned the doctor, he found the doctor covered with shame and confusion. "I cannot tell you how sorry I am," he said, "but I got so busy that I forgot your brain and it is not ready yet." When the minister realized how gained
the physician was, he set his mind at ease in this cruel fashion, "Never mind, I have decided to join the Methodist Church and you can keep my brain as long as you please."

In sober sincerity I took my subject seriously at first, but when I got up to reasonable number seventy-one, I say that my speech was going to be a bit too long. Then I sought to arrange the reasons according to their importance, but I became as confused as the centipede who, on being questioned as to which foot he put forward first, at last toppled over on his side in utter bewilderment. He was a bit like the fine old grandfather who had an unusually luxuriant growth of spinach upon his chin. His grandson asked him just before retiring, "Grandpa, do you sleep with your whiskers under the cover or on top of the cover?" The old man looked sad and bewildered. "Son, I just can't tell you," he said. But when a little later he went to bed, he stuffed his whiskers under the cover, but he could not endure it. He snatched them out and put them on top. Again he found the position impossible. Once more they were stuffed under the cover, then again on top of the cover. He kept this up until three o'clock in the morning when he got up and shaved.

Instead of telling you why I am not a Baptist, I am going to use your treatment of me as a shining example of how to make the other fellow treat you right. Having shown me this courtesy and kindness, of course you can get anything but a trip that you want. That is the way it is always happening. So I am addressing myself tonight especially to those here feeling that they are getting the hot end of the poker. There are some of you here. Being church people, of course you do not get mad at such treatment. After a ministry of a little more than thirty years, I have discovered that church people never get mad—they get hurt. But when they get hurt, they act like other people do when they get mad.

Now then can you and I within certain limits get anything from our neighbor that we desire. You would like him to be interested in you. You would like him
to be kind and thoughtful. You would like his appreciation. I know we sometimes say, "I don't care what anybody thinks of me." But fortunately we are not telling the truth when we say such things. Usually that is when we are caring the most.

If we went folks to be interested in us, the first step is to be interested in them. If we want the other man to be friendly, there is a sure way--be friendly with him. Now and then some woe-begone chap will say to me, "I was at your church last Sunday and would you believe it, not a soul spoke to me." That is only his way of saying, "I was among hundreds of friendly people, but I was such a sullen that I managed to get away without shaking hands with a single soul.

The greatest authority on human relationships that ever lived put it in this fashion, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." I am not forgetting that this man, in spite of His friendliness, went to the cross. Yet generally speaking, we get what we give. It operates like the law of sowing and reaping. As a boy, I used to plow in a river-bottom. Across the river there was a rugged cliff that was the home of an echo. I used to get anything out of that cliff that I desired. If I wanted to be jack up, all I had to do was to talk uply to the cliff. If I wanted to be complimented, all I had to do was to compliment the cliff.

There is an echo in human hearts that operates with the assurance of the law of sowing and reaping. While I was pastor in Houston, a good Methodist sister gave her son a second-hand Ford. Gas and tires were plentiful in those far-off days. So this lad drove his car recklessly. He was especially fond of turning corners in high that he might hear his tires shriek. One day as he was engaging in this favorite pastime, a telephone pole met him. He went out through the windshield and thence to the hospital. They phoned the pastor, and when I got to the hospital, the mother met me almost frantically and said, "O, what have I done that this should happen to me?" It puzzled me for a moment at first. Then I answered, 'You haven't done anything. He did it. But don't blame the Lord. If the Lord
were to snatch a telephone pole out from your boy when he was driving recklessly. He might put one in front of his boy when he was driving carefully." All I am arguing for is for every one to hit his own telephone pole! That is what we do nationally. That is what we do in groups. That is what we do individually.

Years ago a certain prophet, Ezekiel by name, was called to preach to a very difficult congregation. This congregation was made up of a group of people that had been dispossessed. They were a part of a people that had been transferred from one nation to another, as it is happening today. These had lost their native land. They had lost their wealth. Many had lost their loved ones. Many had lost their faith. Therefore, this wise preacher before he undertook to minister to them said, "I sit where they sit." He put himself in their place. He looked out through their eyes, bled through their wounds.

This is the Golden Rule in dramatic form. It is the way life is to work in all its relationships. We are engaged in a world war that has become a necessity. But when this red heil is over, there will only be an armistice and not a peace unless the nations learn to put themselves each in the place of the other. Labor and capital are too often at each other's throats. The final answer to their problem is each learning to put itself in the place of the other.

But this is an opportunity that comes to us individually. It comes to us each day. However uneventful our lives day by day we have a chance to put ourselves in the other fellow's place. One of the most beautiful courtesies that was shown to me was shown by a real stranger. I was traveling in Sweden. Now it so happens that I am a bad sailor. By that I mean that I am a bad sailor. When I am out of sight of land, I feel just like a cholera chicken looks.

Late one afternoon we sailed from Danzig. Before we were out of harbor I hurried into the dining-room to eat my lunch. One can do better when one has something to work on. But before the lunch could be brought, I had to keep an engagement with the rail. While there, I met a splendid gentleman from Houston,
Texas. He was a long, silious, adderous chap, and about the only man I ever met who could get as sick as I could. We had sweet fellowship together. He had on a red tie. A puff of wind blew it in his face. "There goes my liver," he said desperately. "I knew it would come."

So having finished the sight-seeing, I went down to Butterbog where was a world's fair. Soon I had finished with that and decided to catch the first boat back to London. Being alone, I was in no hurry to make my reservation. Therefore, when I undertook to make this belated job, the porter told me that there was only one berth and that was in a room with three other men. I took it because there was nothing else. When I got on boat and outside the harbor, the usual thing happened. So I went down and went to bed. As the long afternoon wore away, a sunny-faced gentleman looked in, spoke to me, came over to tick the covers under, then looked at me indignantly, saying, "This is my bed." "No, it isn't," I replied, "but it isn't worth arguing about because it isn't fit to sleep on."

So he went away.

A little later I felt I could not be worse off on deck; so I went up there, attended to a few chores, then came back to my room again. There to my amusement I found him in my bed. I had by force to take his bed, which was very comfortable while mine was impossible. Naturally, I hunted him up the next day to say, "Why did you do that?" With obvious embarrassment he said, "I have been doing a bit of missionary work over in the Congo and I had got used to roughing it. I knew I could sleep on your bed, and I knew you could not; so I gave you mine." Naturally he won me.

Here is something that will work where joy is greatest and friction the sharpest in our homes. Many a marriage that threatens to go on the rocks would change into radiant romance again if the husband would learn to sit where the wife sits, and if the wife would learn to put herself in the husband's place.

Then there is the question of our troublesome young people. According to us oldsters, each generation is worse than the one that was just ahead. This
is the case in spite of the fact that we are constantly putting these trouble-
some youth in their place. We tell them frankly, I never would have thought of
doing that when I was a boy. Thus we imply that when we were young we were all
that we ought to have been and did all that we ought to have done. They listen
to us, knowing full well that either we are not telling the truth or that we have
done some tall backsliding.

Last spring a young chap came home from school, walked into the office to
greet his hard-working dad. The father looked up in huge disapproval. "George,"
he said, "you look like a perfect idiot." About that time an old friend of the
family came in, greeted George with vast enthusiasm, saying, "You are the spitting
image of your dad." "Yes," said George, "that was just what Dad was telling me
as you came in."

Of course we can hardly expect our youngsters to put themselves in our
places since they have never been old. We ought to be able to put ourselves in
their places since we have been young though some of us have forgotten it.

If you want an outstanding example of what interest in the other fellow
will do, look at me. Here I am refusing even the high privilege of telling you
why I am glad I am not a Baptist. Certainly, this is a rule that works. It is
a sure way of getting from the other fellow what you desire for yourself.

"There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.

"Give love and love to your heart will flow,
And strength for your utmost need.
Give faith and a thousand hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.

"For life is the mirror of king and slave,
'Tis just what we are and do;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you."