Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, had this to say:

"TACKLING THE TOUGH ASSIGNMENT"

TEXT: "I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." I Corinthians 16:9

INTRODUCTION The significant word in this sentence is the word "and". I'm sure that most of us if we had been describing the situation at Ephesus would have used the word "but". Paul had established something of a Christian bridgehead in that pagan city; it presented a challenging opportunity for preaching the Gospel. He had decided to continue his work there for that reason, and yet not for that reason alone. His decision was reinforced by the fact that there were "many adversaries". It was an unusual reason for remaining; with most men it would have been the justification for pulling out.

I think the average person finds encouragement to continue when circumstances are favorable. An open door, a group of eager, enthusiastic supporters, a general spirit of harmony: these offer a combination of inducements to remain at the post of duty. On the other hand, when obstacles have to be overcome, when hardships have to be endured, when ill-will has to be confronted - the tendency then is not to dig in, but to get out, to move on to a situation less taxing and more to one's liking. But with Paul it was the other way. Opposition was the call to carry on. Difficulty brought out the best that was in him. That there were "many adversaries" in Ephesus meant that his task was bigger than he had thought, that it would require a greater measure of patience, persistence, courage, hope and faith. Paul was not reluctant to tackle the tough assignment. He welcomed it! We're reminded of those words from Kennedy's Inaugural Address. (Quotation)

TWO CONTRASTING ATTITUDES Suppose we think about these two contrasting attitudes. There is, on the one hand, on one side of our human nature, a craving for a life situation that is congenial, without problems, risks, obstacles. There is an instinctive avoidance of difficulty and an avid pursuit of comfort and ease. And these are exceptionally strong in an affluent society like ours. For many the life that seems ideal is an early retirement in a warm and pleasant climate with all material necessities provided for and no obligation to do anything but what one is inclined to do. Some time ago a poll asked Americans what they wanted the most. Hear the results:
(1) new car, (2) new house, (3) new clothes, (4) permanent peace (5) house furnishings. No mention of schools, hospitals, churches.

A wealthy man took his son to one of our junior colleges. He told the headmaster that he had had a difficult time of it in his youth and he was resolved that his son should have an easier time of it. His son was not to be short of cash. The conditions of his life were to be as pleasant as possible. The headmaster stopped the father short and said to him, "I'm sorry, but we can't take your boy here. What you are proposing for him would ruin him, and if he came here on those terms he would corrupt the school. You are seeking to deprive your boy of the very discipline that enabled you to succeed."

The Bible reminds us: "It's good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth". Exempt the young, exempt people of any age from having to rough it, make things smooth for them, screen them from the world's east winds, order their days so that they have no mountains to climb, do this and you do them a disservice. Perhaps they may be socially accomplished, but they may be spineless - without initiative, without grit, without determination. Their moral fiber may be flabby. And in an affluent society, where soft living seems to become a goal, we must be on our guard lest we allow every sort of flabbiness to occur. Where there is avoidance of difficulty and where comfort is mistaken for civilization, before long there is a silent, pervasive seduction and softening of character - not only individual, but also national.
Tough Assignments

Yes, on one side of our human nature there is this craving for a life situation that is agreeable, without demands and dangers, without risks and responsibilities - a life situation with four walls, a fireside, a cozy comfortable corner and an easy armchair. However, on the other side of our human nature there is the wish for a tough and demanding assignment. And those who have it rebel against shelteredness and softness. They revel in pitting themselves against heavy odds and in spirit they resemble the Seabees of the Second World War who had for their slogan: "The Difficult We Do Right Away; The Impossible Takes a Little Longer". And there is another slogan or saying that comes to mind: "When the Going Gets Rough, the Tough Get Going".

One thinks of the long succession of gallant men who set themselves to scale Mount Everest, the highest point on the world's surface - young men, tough men, men asking for the tough assignment, none of them listing comfort or ease in their scale of values. Mallory, Irvine - Tenzing, Hillary. What they have told us is that there is no height, no depth, that the spirit of man, guided by a higher Spirit cannot attain.

One thinks, too, of Robert Manry, the Cleveland copy-reader, who a year ago last summer at the age of 47 (the age when most men dilute their dreams if they have any with weekend golf, odds jobs around the house, and alcohol) crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a 13 foot sailboat and taking 78 days to do it. I couldn't help but think of him this summer as we flew across the Atlantic in 7 or 8 hours. Why did he do such a thing? Why did he undertake such a foolhardy assignment or adventure? He had a wife and a family, a good steady job, a home in the suburbs, and all of Lake Erie to sail on over the weekends. Why did he do it? He had all of that, but he also had a dream - a long, cherished dream, and he felt he must risk everything to achieve it. "There comes a time", Manry's wife quotes him as saying, "that one must decide, of one's dreams, either to risk everything to achieve them or to sit for the rest of one's life in the backyard". There burned in him something of this wish for a tough and demanding adventure. Some have questioned what was gained by his crossing. His crossing reminded us of something about man's spirit, about his nature. He won't take no for an answer. There is something of the heroic in man, something indomitable and invincible in his nature. He refuses to be daunted by difficulties, no matter how great they may be.

One thinks, too, of Peace Corps volunteers, of Civil Rights crusaders putting their lives on the line, of the dedicated anti-poverty workers, of young men enlisting for patriotic motives for military service in Vietnam, of young men unable to enlist for reasons of soul and conscience and constrained to protest our involvement in Vietnam, of men like Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara and on the other side, men like Senator Fulbright. We think of men like Dag Hammaskjold, U Thant, Martin Luther King. Common to all of them is this readiness to undertake a difficult task. Far from their minds is the disposition to rank pleasure and popularity uppermost in their scale of values. I suppose that Mayor Lindsay as much as any man hankers every now and then for the four walls, fireside, a cozy chair and comfortable corner, but he has embarked on a rugged and demanding assignment that will keep him going most hours of the day and a great many hours of the night when most men are home relaxing and enjoying the TV and their families. It will have to be the same with other men in this city if the level of life in this city is to be lifted higher. It is not enough to make a living and do nothing to improve the moral and spiritual life of this city.

Christians and the Church

Consider now the relevance of what I have been saying for Christians and the Church. Jesus knew that on one side of human nature there is the craving for a cozy and comfortable existence. He also knew that on the other side of man's nature - the higher side - there is a will to face difficulty, to encounter obstacles, to serve a cause selflessly.
As a leader of men he knew that there are two ways by which to win support. You may bribe or you may challenge. You can either appeal to a man's selfish instinct or you may challenge his heroic instinct. And the nature of the appeal will do much to determine the quality of response. Bribe and you will get lip-service, minimum service, and when the storm breaks, many a defaulter. Challenge and at once you sift the wheat from the chaff. Challenge and those who will respond will offer the love and loyalty of their hearts. Jesus knew this and with Him it was never a bribe, but always a challenge.

It was to a tough assignment that He called people. We, in our day, have seemed to forget that. We avoid the tough assignments. He told them bluntly that the going would be difficult, that the way would be hard, that the gate to discipleship was narrow. We, in our day, don't want to hear this. We want the church - not on His terms, but on our easy going terms.

He taught them to think of life as a crusade, with plenty of wounds along the way. To live religiously was to live dangerously. And so it proved. According to tradition none of the Apostles died in bed. Civil life in those days, thanks to the Pax Romana, was comparatively secure and tranquil; those who wanted peace and quietness could have it. There was only one danger spot and that was the Christian Church. Join that and you took the risk of being thrown to the lions, butchered to make a Roman holiday. This explains the phenomenal growth of the Christian Church in the first three centuries. It became a magnetic center of attraction for heroic souls. It has not always been that, but it has never ceased to be that. It has not ceased, even down to this day, to be a center of attraction for heroic souls. It has its share of good, fine, well-to-do people, who are for the most part content with things as they are, who don't want to be greatly disturbed or to get too deeply involved - but it also has in its ranks those who do not balk at the tough and demanding assignments, who always manage to find time to do them, who are always to go all the way, whose love and loyalty runs deep, whose commitment is strong, whose vision is broad, who put their faith first.

**A NEW COMMITMENT** Today is Homecoming Sunday. This is the time for each of us to pause and to take stock of our own life in terms of our commitment to those values that Christ's way represents. This is the time to renew that commitment. So much is at stake. More and more I feel the tide is running against the Christian Church. The church in the decade ahead is in for a rough time, and it may have to regain more of its heroic quality if it is to survive. It will be a time when the sifting of the wheat from the chaff will take place. Like Paul, we too live in a secular and pagan and materialistic city, one that can be so hostile to those values represented by our faith. We, too, face "many adversaries" - among them indifference, apathy and a desire not to be involved on the part of many who consider themselves Christian. The obstacles are there, but so, too, are the opportunities. And there is one fact on which we can rely. God always gives power to those who have tackled something so big, so overwhelming that their own resources are insufficient.

Ministers grow weary having to bribe and coddle people in order to get a response. Christ never intended it to be that way; The church is weakened by that approach. This is the year when you will be challenged to deepen your commitment, to expand your service, to devote yourself more fully to the service of Christ in this place, in this community. In the church, Outside the church. On Sundays. During the week. Some will not respond to the challenge and will drift away. We know this. We're prepared for it. And so here today - in these moments - in your own way and in your own words - in the privacy of your thought - I would challenge you to renew your commitment...to ask God to use you for a tough assignment. Let us do it now...together....in quiet prayer....
to use you for a difficult assignment. Let us do it now, together in a spirit of prayer. Let us pray.

**PRAYER**

Teach us, good Lord, to serve Thee more faithfully; to give and not to count the cost. To fight and not to heed the wounds. To toil and not to seek for rest. To labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will. In the spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen
"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility. I welcome it."
PARK AVENUE
METHODIST CHURCH
106 East 86th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
AT 9-6997

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SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY  
September 25, 1966

ORDER OF WORSHIP  
11 a.m.

ORGAN  "Cantabile"  C. Lorett

CALL TO WORSHIP
HYMN NO. 381  "The Church's one foundation"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Seated)
Most merciful Father, we have done little to forward thy kingdom in this world, to foster the brotherhood of man, and to establish love as the law of life. We have allowed self to blind us, pains to embitter us. Pardon our shortcomings; forgive our neglect; give us a pure heart intent on pleasing Thee. Help us in all our seeking to seek first thy kingdom and thy righteousness. And make us to come, as came Thy Son, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We ask this in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

RESPONSIVE READING  "The Path of the Just"  Page 606

GLORIA PATRI

APOSTLES' CREED

ANTHEM  "O How Amiable"  R. V. Williams

SCRIPTURE  Matthew 10: 34 - 42

VERSICLES AND RESPONSES
PASTORAL PRAYER

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF CONGREGATIONAL CONCERN

ANTHEM  "Benedictus, Es Domine"  L. Sowerby

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 162  "0 for a thousand tongues to sing"

SERMON  "Tackling the Tough Assignment"  Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 279  "God of grace and God of glory"

BENEDICTION  Choral Amen

ORGAN  "Fiat Lux"  T. Dubois

*** Interval for ushering

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in Fellowship Hall after the service. The hostesses today are Mrs. Brun, Mrs. Blackton, Mrs. D'Ambrosio, Mrs. Ensign, Dr. Nicholson, and Miss Winmill.

USHERS

The ushers today are Mr. Dick, Mr. Burr, Mr. Hankins, Mr. Hedin, and Mr. Hernly.

CHILD CARE

Child care service is available from 11 to 12 on the fourth floor for those parents with infants or preschool children. Mrs. Pauline Levy is in charge.

YOUNG ADULT FELLOWSHIP

The Young Adult Fellowship will meet this evening at seven o'clock in the fourth floor lounge to make plans for the coming months. Refreshments will be served. All young adults in the congregation are cordially invited.

WORLD-WIDE COMMUNION

Next Sunday we shall celebrate World-Wide Communion. On this day we shall receive a special offering for the Fellowship of Suffering and Service. Envelopes will be placed in the pew. We hope that you will be generous in giving to this worthy cause.

WOMAN'S SOCIETY

The Woman's Society of Christian Service will hold a luncheon on October 8 at twelve o'clock. All women of the church are invited to attend. If you have not yet returned your reservation card, we encourage you to do so today.