

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. *Hebrews 12:12-13*

PERSUADED

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. *Acts 26:28*

Some have conjectured that what Agrippa was actually saying to Paul was, "Do you think you have persuaded me to be a Christian?" Whether or not this is true or if he was just commenting on how well a case Paul presented and how close he came (in his own mind) to receiving it, it seems to me that Agrippa made the same mistake in his thinking that most men do. He thought he could be convinced by human arguments that the gospel is true or reject it on the basis of not being persuaded by those same arguments.

The error in this thinking is that the truth of the Gospel is not in anyway affected by the abilities of men to convince others of its validity nor is a man on a neutral ground in its consideration and just as probable to be convinced of its truth as not. This very error permeates what is called modern day "evangelism". It is a common practice among many to "train" people to be able to "present" the gospel to the lost. They are convinced that if the proper techniques and phraseology is used then success in "winning souls" is assured. Now the scripture indicates that if the fields are white unto the harvest and the commandment has been given to "preach the gospel to every creature" the LORD has directed us to pray to the LORD of the harvest that he would send laborers into the harvest. (see Mat.9:38) When GOD sends HIS word it always accomplishes exactly what it was sent to do, whether it is intended as a sweet savor of life unto those that believe or a further word of condemnation upon those whose hearts are hard and will not believe HIS truth. (see Isa.55:11; II Cor,2:14-17)

Man is not on a neutral footing when it comes to a consideration of GOD's word. By nature all men hate the truth of GOD (see Rom.1:18-32) and are enemies of it unless that rebellious spirit is broken and the heart opened to receive the word of GOD. (see Acts 16:14) The greatest of orators may stir the emotions of men but only the LORD can change the heart. Saul of Tarsus was convinced by no man of the truth of the risen LORD. However the LORD was able to "persuade" him that it was HE who was the MASTER. May the LORD be pleased to persuade us. *"Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."* (Psa 80:3)

GOD is able to raise up the stones to praise HIS name so we should not think it any sort of necessity on HIS part to use man in the proclamation of the gospel. However it has pleased HIM to convey the sweet message of the gospel; not on the wings of seraphs, but through the preaching of the gospel by the lips of men. (see Rom 10:14,15) It is common for men to think that GOD is able to use only those who are trained in a certain way or that possess certain skill levels in this endeavor. The true communication of the gospel, however, is in no sense enhanced by the innate skill of a man nor is it in any way lessened by the relative weakness of

any vessel in which the LORD is pleased to place HIS message. (see II Cor. 4:7) Paul continually said that he was no great orator but the word of GOD moved in him mightily and his preaching was a demonstration of the LORD's power. (see I Cor.2:4; Col.1:28,29; II Cor.10:10)

Modern "evangelism" (so called) centers its efforts in skillful presentations and in persuading men to do something. They are "persuaded" by many methods, sometimes even trickery and appealing music, but most often with great amounts of emotional appeals, to step out, step up, walk the aisle, escape hell, let Jesus into their heart, give the LORD a chance, or make a decision to be saved. On the other hand those who are true preachers of the gospel are simply that, preachers of the gospel. The persuasion that they are involved in is a clear declaration of what JESUS CHRIST has done in the behalf of sinners. Their only desire is to magnify HIM who has purchased eternal redemption for that which was lost. Paul never asked those he preached to, to do anything. He preached JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified. He said since we have the fear of the LORD, we persuade men by proclaiming that truth of GOD which HE is able to convince men of. (see II Cor.5:11-21) Paul said to Agrippa, *"I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am."* (Acts 26:29) Paul was saying to the king, I wish you were persuaded of the same things that I have been convinced of in the same fashion and by the same ONE. What was it that he was persuaded of by the LORD?

The LORD has cleansed all things for HIS people. *"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."* (Rom 14:14) The LORD satisfied and fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law in the behalf of HIS elect bride and there is nothing in the earth that can bring them into condemnation. (see Rom. 8:1) *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Rom 8:38-39)

The LORD calls HIS children by name and makes them new creatures in HIS own time. *"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."* (Rom 15:14) The LORD not only purchased for us an eternal redemption but HE has begun a good work in us which HE will perform to the end. (see Phil. 1:6) Eternal life is begun in those who are called by HIS grace and they shall never die.

This faith wherein we stand is that which has been the hope of GOD's children in all ages. *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."* (Heb 11:13) GOD has never set forth any means of salvation for HIS elect in any age except that which has been accomplished by JESUS CHRIST. The old testament saints died without the full realization of the finished work of CHRIST, whereas we have been made aware that HE has actually paid the purchase price in time, our sin having been imputed to HIM and HIS righteousness to us. Those who were heirs of the promise in ages past are just as much partakers of that purchased redemption as we are. The gospel of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the faith once delivered to the saints. We look for no other.

JESUS CHRIST alone is the hope and expectation of the true believer. *"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."* (2Tim 1:12)

Of what are you persuaded?

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