

# GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VII

Issue 21

*Published occasionally for Zion's mourners*

*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*

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## PERSUADING MEN

*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

*II Corinthians 5:11*

The prevailing wisdom(?) of the religious world today is that it is both an obligation and a necessity for Christians to convince the world to become followers of CHRIST. Not only is this viewed as the bounden duty of each believer but it is also viewed as not just possible but as commonly occurring. So in order to accomplish this supposedly noble quest, well meaning men have devised and employed all sorts of methods of philosophical reasoning and pleading with the emotions of men to get them to perform some action which can be construed as making a conscious decision to embrace the tenets of the "faith". This is called by the multitude, preaching the gospel and making converts or getting folks saved.

, Those who are thus "persuaded" are assured that the validity of their "decision" has given them an entrance into the kingdom of GOD and at the same time secured for them all manner of eternal blessings. This is then very often accompanied by public confessions of faith, baptisms, and enrollment in discipleship classes in order to educate them on how they should act now that they have taken on this new persona by deciding to become a Christian.

Some have become very skilled at these forms of "persuasion" and have even developed programs and methods which are supposedly useful in reaping large harvests of "souls". By and large the Christian (so-called) religious institutions of the world are peopled by folks who never even question whether or not there is one shred of scriptural validity to these methods or whether anything remotely akin to this is ever exemplified in the pages of the Bible.

It seems right to the natural mind that a man can become a Christian as easy as he can join the Lion's club. Such "conversions" are simply another act of mans "free will"(.?). It has been my observation that those who are thus "persuaded" to "follow CHRIST" by the sophistry and tactics of men are much like that seed which fell upon the stony and thorny ground and sprang up quickly but soon withered or was choked out by the cares of this world. No amount of instruction or persuasion can give a man a love for the things of GOD. *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:44)

Only the SPIRIT of GOD moving upon men in sovereign mercy can awaken a dead sinner and convince him of his lost condition. HE does this totally without the instrumentality of men even as the LORD said, *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."* (John 3:8) Only the SPIRIT of GOD can persuade a man that CHRIST alone is the SAVIOR of sinners. Men cannot aid others with this revelation nor can they hasten their understanding. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in*

*our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2Cor 4:6)*

So what did Paul mean when he said *“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;”*?

First of all, a man must be acquainted with the “terror of the LORD” in order to have any grasp of that to which the sons of GOD are called. Paul is saying we “fear the LORD”. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” (Prov. 9:10)* *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:28-29)*

Those that fear the LORD wait upon HIS precepts and do not assume that they can contrive some methodology to accomplish something in a manner HE has not prescribed. One only need to look at the fate of Uzzah as he rode the new ox cart designed by David. It was a brand new oxcart and no doubt very fitted to the task at hand according to the thinking of men. But GOD said the Levites should carry the ark. HE did not ask nor need David's input.

The GOD with whom we have to do will not share HIS glory with any. *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1Cor 1:27-29)* When men consider themselves to be “necessary” for the LORD to accomplish HIS work in the earth then they are unacquainted with the *“terror of the LORD”*.

We *“persuade men”*. Paul is here saying we testify of the truth which HE has taught us. He said, *“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1Co 2:3-5)* The Psalmist said, *“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.” (Psa 107:2)* Peter said, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1Pet 3:15)*

No where in all of the scriptures can you find any of the apostles preaching in a manner wherein they asked men to do something. They simply proclaimed the truth of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST. The gospel is a declaration of HIS glory, HIS GODHEAD, HIS purpose, HIS redemption, HIS resurrection and ascension, and HIS return to claim HIS purchased possession. It is neither an offer nor a proposition, nor a call for men to perform some activity, nor an opportunity to exercise faith. HE has accomplished the salvation of HIS people and GOD is pleased to send men into the earth to proclaim that acceptable year of the LORD. HE is pleased to give HIS elect ears to hear and faith to believe that which HE has done in their behalf. *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1Cor. 1:30-31)*

Because we have been given a reverence, respect, and love for the LORD we are compelled to testify of the gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD. Yea woe is unto us if we preach not that gospel. We are those who declare (i.e., persuaders) the whole counsel of GOD to men by the grace of GOD. We are convinced that HE shall cause HIS word to prosper in the thing whereto HE is pleased to send it by whatever means or lack thereof which HE is pleased to use.

*“For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others.” (1 Thess 2:3-6)*