

We Persuade Men

Jack Thompson

Reading from 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, beginning with verse 10: "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are make manifest also in your conscience." Reading through verse 11.

In these verses we hear the inspired apostle Paul as he points out the uncertainty of this life and reality of a life beyond the grave. In verse 10, the apostle gives us the sobering thought that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Deity; to stand in judgment for the deeds which we have done while in this the sojourn of the flesh. You will notice in this verse that the apostle teaches our judgment will be concerning the things DONE in the body, whether good or bad. There can be no doubt, to the one who rightly divides the word of God, that there is something that must be done by those who would please the Lord. In Matthew 7:21-23, the Master says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." What was that? "He that DOETH the will of my Father." There is something to DO in serving Jehovah God. Whatever is included in the Will of the Father, man must do if the Father is pleased. And this involves more than faith. Surely faith is the first requirement, because, "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). But, when one teaches eternal salvation upon the doctrine of faith alone, that person has not rightly divided God's Word. James says in chapter 2, verse 24, "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Isn't it strange how men would teach that there is no responsibility upon the part of man to DO ANYTHING, yet James states that man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Surely, it is understood that the works involved here are NOT WORKS OF MAN'S inventions; rather, these works are the works of righteousness; obedience to the works of God. The case James uses as an example serves to point this out. Abraham was justified by faith, so says Paul in Romans 4:3; yet, James says Abraham was justified by works. Do Paul and James contradict each other? Did the Holy Spirit make a mistake in one of these passages? Oh, No!! Paul was right when he states Abraham was justified by faith and James was right when he states Abraham was justified by works. The truth of the two passages is this: Abraham had enough faith in God to DO what God commanded him to do; that is, the works of God. Abraham's faith was perfected by his obedience. Surely, Abraham believed God; but it was not a barren faith, but a living faith, an active faith, an obedient faith, a faith that listened to what God commanded and then moved to comply with Divine will. So is man's salvation today. Man is saved by faith. Jesus says, "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). I could read to you multitudes of passages that teach the necessity of faith. But the faith that saves is the faith that obeys; the faith that moves to do what is commanded by God. When one talks about his great faith; but will not do what God commands, rest assured his faith is not great enough to save him.

Let me hasten to point out, when we talk about doing something, or works, we are not discussing what man might devise, or innovate, not man's wisdom or how he wishes to serve God. We ARE discussing the commands that originate in and from heaven, the commands that bear the mark of Divine revelation; the commands given through the inspired writers of the Last Will and Covenant of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When we learn of a stipulated command given by Christ and/or his apostles rest assured man cannot please God until he does what is commanded. That is faith in action. Obedience because of faith in God's Word.

Going back to our beginning passage of 2 Corinthians 5, we now notice verse 11: "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." You will note that Paul said, because of the judgment (vs 10), knowing the terror of the Lord (vs 11); realizing what will happen when man stands before the presence of Deity; to give an accounting of all things done in the body; Paul says, WE PERSUADE MEN. Notice closely what Paul has said:

First, he says, WE. In other words, men are not persuaded in this dispensation by angels, dreams, feelings, not even by the direct power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says "WE," persuade men. We, the faithful of God. Primarily in this verse, the inspired apostles. God now uses mankind to persuade others to obey. Examples are found of this fact in the book of Acts. In Acts 9, Christ used Ananias, a preacher to tell Paul what to do. In Acts 10, Cornelius was told to send for Peter, who would tell him WORDS, whereby thou shalt be saved (restated in Acts 11:14). In Acts 8, Philip was sent to tell the Ethiopian eunuch what to do. In the great commission of our Lord, Christ said, "Go and preach." Men are to be persuaded by other men. If man had to wait for God to persuade him, then why so much preaching of the part of those who so believe? Why would some spend their time and money preaching the gospel, all the while saying you must wait for God to compel you? No! Paul says, "We persuade men."

Second, Paul said we PERSUADE men. He states that mankind must be persuaded to do God's will. To persuade means to plead, earnestly urge, beseech. We cannot frighten, scare, trick, or coerce man to obey God. How many times modern day preachers use death bed tales, grave yard stories to frighten young people---yea children---into making a decision (whatever that is) for Christ. But such is not in harmony with the word of God. We might ask, with what did Paul use to persuade men? The answer: The Gospel, or the good news must be preached; it must be believed, and it must be obeyed in order for salvation to be enjoyed by man. The gospel demands FAITH, as already shown. It demands REPENTANCE. Acts 17:30, states, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." It demands a CONFESSION of Christ Jesus as the Son of God. Listen to Romans 10:10, "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The gospel demands BAPTISM in water unto or for the remission of sins. Hear our Lord in Mark 16:15, 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be

condemned." Peter states in Acts 2:38, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Paul was told, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." When one is persuaded and obeys, that one becomes a Christian, and not before. This is doing the will of the Father. And remember Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Third, Paul said We Persuade MEN. Note Paul did not say we must beg God to save; he did not say we persuade Christ or the Holy Spirit; but we persuade men. This one passage destroys the old mourners bench type of salvation, where men and women shouted loud and long for God to come down and save them. This removes the emotional frenzy that so many desire to use in their service to God. My friends in this radio audience, God has already shown His willingness to save you. Jesus Christ left heaven, took upon himself the form of flesh, eventually dying the cruel death of crucifixion on the cross to show the Father's love for you. In Luke 19:10, the inspired words of God states, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Christ came to give Himself a ransom for the sins which mankind commits. And that included you and it includes me. Hear the apostle Peter in his second letter, chapter 3, verse 9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Does this sound like man must wait for God to come down and shock him? That man must wait for some direct jolt from heaven before he can be saved? Oh, No! God has already made provision for your salvation and mine. It remains for us to accept what the Lord has done for us. He has shed His blood, offered Himself as our sacrifice. But we must have confidence (that's FAITH) in Him and then obey the will of the Father. Yes, Paul states, We persuade men. This is the purpose of this radio broadcast, that we might persuade you in our listening audience to examine the Word of God, to study the scriptures, and that you might be persuaded to obey the Word of Heaven, the will of the Father, that you may have the hope of eternal life when this life in the flesh is over.

In the language of the beloved apostle Paul, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, We persuade men." But the question: Persuade men to do what?? The answer: To obey the Gospel; that which is the power of God unto salvation. Hear Paul once again, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation." But, how does one obey the gospel? One must first hear, for "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Hearing the word of God, one is led to believe in Christ Jesus as the Son of God; to turn from sins committed; confess Christ Jesus as God's Son, and be buried in the grave of water in baptism for the remission of past sins. Then that one, having been born into God's family, must live a righteous life.

Sometimes we hear people say, it makes no difference what kind of a life one lives, the way a Christian lives has nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of the soul. Don't you be deceived, my friend. Hear Paul's language to Titus, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying

ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14). Yes, a thousand time, YES, there is a life to be lived if one is to enjoy the eternal reward of the soul. And when mankind attempts to tell you that the life lived has nothing to do with salvation, you mark it down that person is not rightly dividing the word of God.

What is our condition? Are you a faithful child of God, laboring and working in the vineyard of the Master with other faithful servants of God? If not, we persuade you, we plead with you, accept your responsibility, obey God while time and opportunity is yours.