

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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CHRISTIANITY: A MATTER OF PERSUASION

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Christians see those who have lost their way in life and wish the wanderer would come to Christ for direction. Christians look at those who are wasting away in sin, and wish the profligates would come to Christ for restoration and a healthy new beginning. Christians see their lost loved ones drawing closer and closer to an eternity in Hell, and wish they could grab them and move them safely away from precipice of eternal destruction. All of the grabbing we would like to do is for naught, for we know that Christianity is not a matter of force. It is a matter of persuasion.

After hearing Paul, Agrippa said, “With but little persuasion, thou wouldest make me a Christian” (Acts 26:28). While Paul desired Agrippa and everyone who heard his voice that day to be “as I am”, He had to rely on the message to persuade the hearers. The persuading factor in the message was fulfilled prophecy. Paul simply presented the facts of Jesus’ death and resurrection as fulfilling what “the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that Christ must suffer, and how

that He first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22-23).

Prophecy spoken and written down, then perfectly fulfilled over a thousand years later is strong evidence that God is behind the message and the fulfilling event. Paul could not force Agrippa to be a Christian, but he tried to persuade him.

The message of God’s love has persuasive power. To know that God loved us so much, that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us so we would not have to perish, has the potential to draw the hearer closer (Jn. 3:16). To know that Jesus willingly laid down his life for us so we could become righteous before God has the potential to draw the hopeless closer (cf. Jn. 10:11,18; 2Cor. 5:21).

If you knew that someone sacrificed themselves so you could live, would you not be moved to honor that person some way in your life? Would not that sacrifice tug harder at your heart if you knew it came from one whom you treated as an enemy? The love of

God possesses this moving power. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...for if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:8, 10).

Contained in this persuasive message of love, lies another persuasive factor. It is God’s wrath. “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:9). We are saved from God’s wrath. It does not cease. For everyone who is unwilling to obey the truth, God’s wrath and indignation awaits them in judgment (Rom. 2:8). When Felix heard Paul speak of the “judgment to come”, he was “terrified” (Acts 24:25). Like many, Felix put off making a change in his life, but God’s wrath does not change towards sin. It will be severely felt in judgment.

Reader, if you are not persuaded to be a Christian, you will never be one. No one can force you.