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THIS PERSUASION

This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. ... But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment.—Gal. 5:8,10

To persuade is to convince or teach. Every Christian should “be fully persuaded in his own mind”; that is, he should exercise his mind in the study of God’s revelation, so as to know just what he believes, and the scriptural reason for his belief. Thus the Apostle responded and testified concerning “the kingdom of God, *persuading* men concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, assisting the willing ones to make up their minds, and to recognize in Jesus the crucified, the one typified in the sacrifices of the Law, and referred to in the Prophets—the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world—putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, being delivered for our offences, but raised for our justification, in which risen and glorified condition, he shall soon fulfill all the prophetic declarations of glory and blessing.

After summing up the evidence of God’s love as revealed in the fact that “He spared not his own Son, but *delivered him up for us all*” and that since “It is Christ that died” for our sins, and thus became our ransom price from sin’s penalty, the Apostle says no one has a right to condemn us, for surely God who has justified us through this offering of his Son, would not now condemn us. Then he concludes his strong argument by saying, “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.*” (Rom. 8:38.) All God’s love and mercy and blessings come to the race in and through Jesus and his work—“through whom are all things, and we in him.”

But in the Scripture under consideration, the Apostle refers to a teaching or *persuasion* which was being advanced in the Church, which he assures them is not of God. This shows the necessity of guarding our judgments, so that we be persuaded only of God, and not by the adversary, even though he should present his persuasion through some of those who have been recognized as teachers in the Church.

Let us closely examine this evil *persuasion* here referred to, that we may judge whether it is being now used to “trouble” the Church. The Apostle’s argument as shown by the preceding context, is

not against the Law. No, that is the common way of viewing the matter, but an incorrect view. The law was the law of God, hence could not be bad. It was the same law, of which the same Apostle declares: The law is just and holy and good. (Rom. 7:12.) It is manifestly incorrect then to suppose that he is here opposing the law. His argument is, that because of inherited condemnation and weakness, the law could not justify any to life: that is to say, no one would be counted worthy of everlasting life on account of right doing, (keeping the law,) because all are imperfect and sinful by inherited nature and none could keep the law perfectly.

It was because the keeping of the law could not *justify* (declare just, or righteous, or pure) any one, but on the contrary, reprov'd and condemn'd all, that Jesus came and gave himself a *ransom* for all, to thus redeem us from our inherited curse. Hence while the Law is good, it was useless as a justifier of sinners, for it condemn'd *totally* all who did not harmonize with it perfectly.

The Apostle was writing to Christians at Galatia, some who had been heathens. They had originally received the correct idea, that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and that through his blood we have redemption [from the curse of sin] even the forgiveness of sins. (Gal. 3:1 and 1:4.) But their early trust in Christ's redemptive work had been disturbed by some Christianized Jews, who, while calling themselves Christians, were denying the very foundation fact of Christianity, viz.: that Jesus' death cancelled the sins of all who accepted of him as their Redeemer and Saviour.

They did not deny Jesus, else the Galatians would have been unmoved by their teachings. But *calling* themselves Christians, and confessing that Jesus was a notable and worthy EXAMPLE, they denied the *ransom*—they denied that there was "redemption *through his blood*, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14.) They claimed that Jesus' example was good, yet if any would be saved, they must accomplish their salvation by good works, and observance of the law—circumcision, etc. That these were the facts, is evident from the Apostle's language throughout this epistle.

The very first chapter makes it very prominent: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you INTO THE GRACE OF CHRIST unto another gospel, which is not [Really] another [Gospel]; but there be some that trouble you and would *pervert* [turn] the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:6,7.) We should note the fact that the Apostle clearly and distinctly shows here that the true gospel was that of *grace* or *favor* through Christ.

The gospel says, Here, take salvation as a gift, a favor of God through Christ. Jesus has made of himself a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins; he died the just for the unjust and now presents us

with the fruits of his sacrifice—*free*, for the taking of it. That which you could not win by your own service and merit, you may have *free*, it is the Lord's bounty or grace, a "free gift," purchased for you with his own precious blood. This was indeed glad tidings.

But this other gospel to which some invited them, Paul assures them was *not* really glad tidings at all; it was simply the Jewish law of *salvation* by merit and obedience, supplemented by the name and example of Jesus. But, as all may see, this would do little good, for the name of *Jesus* is nothing except as it means a *Saviour* from sin and its penalty. (See Matt. 1:21.) Jesus' example as a perfect man was so far beyond their ability to follow, that thus they must come short, for his example was nothing less than the *fullest expression of their LAW*, under which, their experience as well as the Apostle's words, proved that none could be *justified to life*. Hence it is that the Apostle declares, that merely linking the example and name of Jesus to the Law, did not constitute another Gospel or good news, for there was nothing in it which could give them life. Under it they would still be in their sins; hence still under the *death penalty*. He marvels that they should turn from justification through the sacrifice of Jesus, and attempt to justify themselves by following his example and keeping the law.

The Apostle argued against "*this persuasion*" or doctrine, which endeavored to base salvation upon the keeping of the law and following Jesus' example, instead of on the *merit of his sacrifice* freely imputed to all who would accept of it.

To present the matter very pointedly before them, he declares that they must choose one of two ways, for God had provided only the two and they could not be blended: Either they must hold to the law and hope for eternal life through obedience to it, gaining all the help they can from the examples of Jesus,

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and prophets, etc., or else on the other hand renounce all these and flee to the merit of Christ's obedience and sacrifice alone. His words are, "I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing"—that is to say, the rite of circumcision, if practiced, is an evidence that you are hoping to *justify yourselves* by your own works, and not trusting to the merits of Jesus' sacrifice; and if not trusting in the merits of Jesus' sacrifice for your sins, then you are still under sin and its penalty as much as though that sacrifice for sin had not been made; for you are not grasping its advantages, and to be had, they must be laid hold of by *faith in him as your sin bearer*. "Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace [favor]. (Gal. 5:2,4.) You, who seek *by works*, to justify yourselves and free yourselves of the condemnation resting upon you, are relying upon that for salvation, whether you call yourselves Christians and follow his example, or whether you call yourselves Jews and follow

the example of Moses and the prophets. The principle is the same. You are turning from and rejecting the *grace*—the favor—THE FREE GIFT of God through Christ, by endeavoring to obtain everlasting life without recognizing the *ransom* which God provided, and which Jesus freely gave.

PRESENT FORM OF THIS PERSUASION

We know of none to-day who are turning to the law, *as such*, though they *are* turning to the law in the sense that they are turning to works, to good deeds, self-denials and Jesus' example (which was keeping the law and justification to life thereby) as the basis of hoped-for future life. They thus turn to an ungiven and unwritten law, which they think *ought to insure* God's favor and blessing of endless life, just as these Galatians turned to the Law given to Israel with its promises of life. Both these of to-day, and those whom Paul addressed, have forgotten or failed to see, that because of sin and depravity, we cannot render *perfect works* to God, and that God's great comprehensive law, as well as its brief synopsis given to Israel, *condemns* as unworthy of life—worthy of death—every creature which cannot, and does not, fulfill its every requirement *perfectly*. If they realized this, they would see the uselessness of presenting to God anything short of PERFECTION, with any hope of its acceptance and reward. Hence the Apostle assures us that "By the *deeds* of the law shall *no flesh* be JUSTIFIED." (Rom. 3:20.) This being true, there is no other "*way*" (John 14:6; 10:1) and "none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," than Jesus, and the way he opened up when he "gave himself a *ransom* for all," and thus opened up a *new way* to life. (1 Tim. 2:6.) The way of the Law (works) had been offered to the sinful and condemned Jew for 1800 years, and had never justified one of them, hence they should have been ready for the *new way* brought to their attention through the glad tidings, viz., that Jesus had *cancelled* the claims of justice against both Jew and Gentile by meeting all its requirements in his own person, on which account God could be just when he *justified* [declared righteous and worthy of life] those who, by *believing* in the ransom, had their sins blotted out and Jesus' righteousness *imputed* to them. (Acts 3:19; Rom. 4.)

O, thoughtless Galatians, who has deluded

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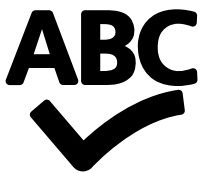
you? [This might be fitly applied to those of our day who are turning from *free grace* assured by Jesus' ransom, to look for grace as the result of their own sacrifices,] before whose eyes Jesus Christ was previously represented as having been crucified and for our sins.

Beloved let us not forget that "This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you," *through* whomsoever it comes; even though it might come through an angel from heaven, it is *from* the

Adversary. It “cometh not from him that calleth you.” But while rejecting “*this persuasion*,” “cast not away your confidence” in Christ and the promises which God has made, which have a great recompense of reward. Be fully persuaded in your own minds—not satisfied to accept of any testimony or persuasion not well sustained by the word of the Lord. Then with Paul you will be “persuaded” that God is “for us,” and that his favor is manifest in that “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up [to death] for us all” [as our ransom]. And if we are thus *justified* by God’s own act, and through his own arranged sacrifice for sins, He certainly no longer condemns us. Who can condemn us while we know that “It is God that justifieth” us? Who could condemn us longer, when it is known that “It is Christ that died” on our behalf, “the just for the unjust”? Nor can anything separate us from such love.

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— November, 1884 —



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