

"Are You Persuaded"

Many people believe everything but have no convictions about anything. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring our need to be persuaded to follow Jesus Christ.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures contained God's revealed Word, and you can believe them. The Scriptures lead us out the miseries of sin and into the joy of God's saving grace. The gospel is good news for a world filled with sin, confusion, chaos, and yes even hate. It tells of the love, mercy, forgiveness, and truth that God gives us. It has the power to lead us from a life of sin to an eternal life of righteousness and love. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

When Paul wanted to persuade King Agrippa about faith in Jesus and the resurrection, Agrippa was a little surprised. Paul said in Acts 26:25 to 29, "For the king (that is Agrippa) knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

Oh yes, it matters whether we accept the gospel. Some have imagined that preaching is unimportant, but hearing and receiving the gospel is essential to knowing the Lord and being saved. You can't follow the Lord unless you know Him and what He says. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1 verse 16). And if you want to be saved, then turn to the gospel found in the New Testament. Have you read the book of Acts?

Now we offer this study on being persuaded free! And if you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Proverbs 4:10 to 13, and examine the need to be persuaded of the gospel.

Our reading today comes from Proverbs chapter 4 verses 10 to 13. And it has a father who is trying to persuade his son to accept his teaching.

Hear, my son, and accept my sayings
And the years of your life will be many.
I have directed you in the way of wisdom;
I have led you in upright paths.
When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;
And if you run, you will not stumble.
Take hold of instruction; do not let go.
Guard her, for she is your life.

And yes, our faith in Christ Jesus, our belief in the gospel of Christ, is our life too. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You've given us Your good news about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Help us to hold fast all of our days to the things You've taught us and to be persuaded. This is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Persuasion is the process of convincing someone to change their beliefs and behavior. Persuasion works through moral or logical arguments; it doesn't try to manipulate or force people. A persuaded person acts because they have come to believe that it is the right thing to do or the best thing to do. We preach Christ and we want those who hear to act willingly, even gladly. We don't want them to act grudgingly, because they felt forced to do something against their will. The New Testament provides examples of some who were persuaded. For instance, John 1:11 to 12 says that, "(Jesus) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Acts 2 and verse 41 says, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

Now the gospel is a good news message of grace and salvation. It tells us what we need to know about the Lord Jesus, but it requires a response. It has details that must be received. Paul described the gospel 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 5. He said, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

Now Paul preached the gospel, and it was received by the Corinthians. Now to receive a message is to accept it, to welcome it, and believe it as true. They believed it so strongly that they would take their stand upon it. Now this couldn't have been easy in a pagan world with many gods to hold to just one God that demands a strict morality. They would be rejected by others, yes. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:26 to 29, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God." Being a Christian is not easy today. Any more than it was in those days.

Now to be a Christian we must hold fast to what we have been taught. If we don't we would believe in vain. You see our faith would do us no good, if we deserted the Lord at the first sign of problems; we wouldn't be saved. God's way is the right way and the only way to heaven. We must believe Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. His suffering on the cross for our sins was real. 1 Peter 3 and verse 18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." Now we were lost in sin, but the Lord's death atoned for our sins. And this atonement meant that we could be forgiven and come to God. Atonement opens the door for reconciliation, that is, friendship with God, and eternal life.

Christ was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 10 verse 10 reminds us that we must confess with our mouths Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, if we wish to be saved. There are some Christian beliefs that are necessary and essential. Believing in the death, burial, and resurrection is necessary. We must accept this really

happened and matters in our lives. We must hold fast to the truth of the gospel, unless we have believed in vain. Now we're only saved if we hold fast.

Hearing the gospel of our salvation is soul-stirring. It stirs us to recall how much the Lord Jesus love us, since He was willing to die on the cross for our sins. We can't overstate the love of the Father and of Jesus Christ. I'm a Christian today, because of that love. 1 John 4:19 simply says that, "We love, because He first loved us." The proof of that love comes from His willingness to suffer for us. I tell ya, no one will ever love you like Jesus loves you. He died on that agonizing cross for you, to atone for your sins. No one else ever did that, and no one could.

The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." What more could Jesus have done for you than to bear a scourging and a crucifixion for you. "By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2 and verse 24). Your healing from sin allows you to draw close to God. And God doesn't want you to be lost. 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4 says, "This is good, and it is pleasing (or acceptable) in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Yes both of those things.

Now this love motivates us to serve the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15 says, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, (and) therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." Do you love the Lord? Does that love motivate you to serve Him? I don't want you to be partially persuaded. I want you to be fully devoted to the Lord Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 12:1 and 2 in the New King James version, he said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." I tell ya, God wants your whole heart and soul and body to be sacrificed to Him. He wants you to stop conforming to the foolish standards of the world and to live in a way that proves God's will is good and acceptable and perfect.

Now the gospel of love teaches us how badly we need the Lord right now. There should be a sense of urgency in our thinking about salvation. Paul could say to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 6 verses 1 and 2, "Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

I tell ya, there's a reason why in Acts 2:41 the people gladly received Peter's preaching and were baptized that very day. The people at Pentecost in Acts 2 and verse 37 were "pierced to the heart," when they heard that they were guilty of crucifying the Lord and Christ. They knew they had sinned against God and did not stand in His favor or grace. They saw the seriousness of their lost condition. The seriousness of their sin. They were grieved and heartbroken over what they had done to the Christ and the position that they put themselves into. Now we can easily understand why they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" They knew that they needed to be saved from sin; they were guilty and they were grieving their sin and its consequences.

Do you grieve about your sins? Do you realize that sin will cause you to be lost? Do you understand that lost people will suffer the wrath of God? Those of us who preach the gospel don't say these things because we think that we're superior to you. We say them because we know both the bitterness and disaster of being lost in sin and also the grace and loving mercy of being saved. We needed salvation just as all people do. Romans 3 and verse 23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God.” John knew in 1 John 1 and verse 8 that, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” He also says in 1 John 1:10, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him (Jesus) a liar and His word is not in us.” My friend, you too have to turn to the Lord Jesus to deal with your sins.

In the book of Acts, people looked at salvation as an urgent matter. Do you? There is a reason in Acts 8 and verse 12 why the people in Samaria who believed Philip’s preaching were baptized that very day. The Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8:35 to 39 wanted to be baptized as soon as he learned the gospel of Jesus. In Acts 22:16 Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” In Acts 16:30 to 33, the Philippian jailor and his family who learned about Jesus and salvation were baptized at once that same hour in the middle of the night. In Acts 19 the twelve people who learned the whole truth about Jesus were baptized at that time.

Now since we don’t have the promise of tomorrow, we need to act today as if today were all we have. We are all people who are physically perishing. And I want to preach as a person who is recognizing God. And recognizing that we all die. I want to preach to dying people. Realizing that I too will die one day. You see there’s an urgency to the message of Jesus Christ. And just as you need forgiveness of sins, so do I. It’s an urgent matter. And Jesus Himself is calling us to follow Him, believe in Him, come to Him, to take up your cross and forsake all you that we have for Him. Luke 9:24 reminds us that, “For whoever wishes to save his life (that is to do his own thing) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for sake of Jesus, he is the one who will save it.” Now there is an urgency and an immediacy yet with a strong note of warning to count the cost in the preaching of Jesus.

The gospel is the good news that gives hope when we see the bad news about our being lost in sin. By its very nature, the gospel tells us our condition before God which should disturb us. Taking thought of our sinning and being lost causes us to grieve and to be ashamed of what we did and what we were. Sadly many people don’t realize their sinful condition or feel like it matters. The gospel must recognize sin as a reality. Thankfully it gives us hope and teaches us what we can become. This moving of hearts leads us to want to repent of our sins and to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

Now preachers of the gospel are like doctors. They have no pleasure in telling people bad news about sin. They have to be honest enough to tell us the truth about sin and salvation, so we can take the right steps for spiritual healing. Can you imagine a doctor who always tells you what is right about your health but never tells you what is wrong, so you can be healed? How can you be cured of some disease when you didn’t even know what is wrong? How can you appreciate and obey the Lord Jesus when you don’t know how desperately you need His salvation? King Agrippa didn’t see enough to be persuaded. Friend I hope that you will be persuaded by the love of Jesus Christ who died for you.

Let’s pray together. Oh Father we’re thankful for the gospel. That wonderful story of the death burial and resurrection of Jesus. And Father we pray that we’ll take His death on the cross seriously. His death for our sins and repent of them. And Father we pray that we’ll always do Your will. To come to follow You. To obey Your will by trusting in You out of love. Turning from sin. Confessing. And Father by being baptized. Yes that’s necessary. We pray Father that You will help us to do the right thing. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many today follow our religiously confused society that is unpersuaded about anything. Many say there are no absolute truths. They don’t think there are any absolute moral teaching and they think that things God calls sinful really aren’t sinful. But, Galatians 5:19 to 21 says that those who commit works of the flesh, “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Others think that all religions will lead to heaven, and nobody will be lost. And they aren’t persuaded that Jesus is the only way to go to the

Father; but Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (and) No one comes to the Father except through me." To say that you believe in Jesus but reject what He teaches is to admit that you don't really believe Him. God's word speaks the truth.

Now many talk about their faith in Jesus but they fail to accept what He teaches and they don't act upon it. He is Lord, and He will judge us one day. And the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." If we want to enter heaven, we must listen to the Lord and obey Him. You cannot please God by doubting Christ or doubting the truth that He teaches. God will not accept substitutes for truth or substitutes for obedience.

Are you persuaded? Have you accepted what He says is true and welcome it? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and live righteously, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now this is what the people at Pentecost did when they learned they had crucified the Lord, and this is what you too must do to obey the Lord.

Now we hope today's study about being persuaded will lead you to commit yourself to Christ. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. and may other materials. You can also see us on YouTube!

We encourage you to show your faith in the Lord Jesus by going to church and worshiping from your heart. Singing praises, observing the Lord's supper, and being close to God. We hope that you will do that and we'll help you find a church home if you're looking for it. Those things are important. For you to worship God. Well you need a church family and go there. Well as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.