

## Good Soil Evangelism and Discipleship Special Studies

### “Persuasion”

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I. The Greek word often translated “to persuade:”  $\pi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\theta\omega$  [*peitho*].

We are most interested here in the passages in which the sense of “to persuade” seems most appropriate. This sense is not commonly found in the Old Testament, but it occurs frequently in the New, particularly in the Book of Acts. It should be remembered that lexically, various forms built upon the root “*peith*” are best translated ‘to be confident,’ ‘to be persuaded,’ or ‘to obey.’

II. Questions to ask of the contexts of the word:

There are several questions to ask concerning the passages in which *peitho* is used to describe the process of “persuading” someone:

1. Who are the individuals doing the persuading?
2. Who are the individuals being persuaded (or not)?
3. What other terms are used to describe the process of persuasion; in other words, what are the other action words in the context that further illustrate the means of persuasion?
4. What are the individuals persuaded about, or what are they persuaded to do?
5. How do they respond to the attempt at persuasion?

III. The passages:

- **Acts 13:43** Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, **persuaded them** to continue in the grace of God.

1. Paul and Barnabas. 2. Many Jews and devout proselytes. 3. “speaking to them” [*proslalountes* (*proslaleo* – to communicate orally)]. 4. “to continue in the grace of God” 5. Unknown

- **Acts 17: 2-4** <sup>2</sup> Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” <sup>4</sup> And some of them **were persuaded**; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

1. Paul, in the synagogue. 2. The Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue in Thessalonica. 3. “reasoned [*dieleksato* (*dialegomai*- to dispute or reason; the word upon which our contemporary term “dialog” is based)] with them out of the Scriptures” “opening and alleging” [*dianoigon* (*dainoigo* – to explain, interpret, or open completely) *kai paratithemenos* (*paratithemi* – to set forth in teaching) ] “preach” [*katangelo* – proclaim, or preach, or set forth

evidence]. 4. to believe that the Jesus whose suffering and resurrection Paul preached to them is Christ. 5. some of the Jewish men, several of the chief women, and a great number of God-fearing Greeks, believed and spent time with Paul and Silas.

- **Acts 18:4** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, **and persuaded** both Jews and Greeks.

1. Paul, in the synagogue. 2. The Jews and Greeks. 3. he “reasoned” [*dielegeto (dialegomai)*] 4. Probably that Jesus is Christ [see above (Acts 17:2-4), and verse 18:5 “testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.*”]. 5. Some believed (verses 7 & 8), while others – of the Jews – reacted in such a blasphemous way that Paul declared that he would leave off preaching to the Jews and take the gospel to the Greeks (verse 6). Notice that the emphasis in the verse is on persuading **people** [“both Jews and Greeks”].

- **Acts 19:8** And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning **and persuading** concerning the things of the kingdom of God. (Act 19:8 NKJ)

1. Paul, in the synagogue and the school of Tyrannus. 2. Jews and Greeks (verse 10). 3. “spoke boldly” [*eparresiakseto (parresiaksomai – to speak freely, or boldly)*] “disputing” [*dialegomenos (dialegomai – to dispute or reason)*]. 4. About the things of the Kingdom of God. 5. Some became hardened, were not persuaded [*epeithoun*], and spoke evil of the “the Way.” Others who had believed and become disciples left the synagogue with Paul and went to the school of Tyrannus.

- **Acts 19:26** "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has **persuaded** and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

1. Paul, at Ephesus and throughout Asia. 2. Many people [here the Gentiles are probably emphasized (see the end of the verse and verse 27)]. 3. “turned away” [*metestesen (methiotemi – to remove, or turn away)*]. 4. That people should turn to God from idols [part of Paul’s message, but the most important part from the perspective the idolater who is speaking. 5. People were persuaded [to become Christians] as evidenced by the threat to the craft and religion of Demetrius and the Ephesians.

- **Acts 26:28:** Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You **almost persuade** me to become a Christian."

1. Paul, before King Agrippa. 2. King Agrippa, and the others listening (verse 29). 3. “defended himself” (verse 1) [*apelogeita (apologeio – to defend, or give a defense)*]; “speak freely” (verse 26) [*parresiaksamenos* (see Acts 19:8, above)] “I am persuaded” (that none of these things escapes His attention) (verse 26). “I know that you believe [the prophets]” (*pisteueis*). 4. His testimony (verses 2-22), that the Jews should repent (verse 20), the testimony of the Prophets to Christ (verses 22-27), and the gospel of Jesus Christ (e.g., verses 18 and 23). Paul wanted the king and all hearers to become believers and Christians, like him in every way except for his bonds. 5. Festus considered him crazy, but Agrippa admitted to Paul “you almost persuade (*peitheis*) me to become a Christian.

- **Acts 28:23-24** So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, **persuading** them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

1. Paul, in his house in Rome. 2. The leaders of the Jews (verse 17). 3. “explained” [*eksetitheta* (*ektithemi* – to declare, or explain)]; “solemnly testified” [*diamarturomenos* (*diamaruromai* - to declare solemnly and emphatically)]. 4. Of the Kingdom of God, persuading them **concerning Jesus**, from the Law and the Prophets. 5. Some were persuaded (*epeithonta*), and some did not believe (*epistoun*) (verse 24).

- **2 Corinthians 5:11** Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, **we persuade men**; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

1. Paul (and his companions?). 2. People. 3. Knowing [by way of motivation] the terror of the Lord [and the reality of the Bema seat judgment]. 4. Not given, though the gospel can be implied from the rest of his writings. 5. Again not given, though Paul’s writings clarify his desire to “win (save) some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

#### IV. Conclusions

Through this study we have learned that persuasion was an important part of the ministry of Paul to both the Jews and the Gentiles. He attempted to persuade people through the use of Scripture, testimony, freely (boldly) speaking, reasoning, clarifying, defending, explaining, teaching, and preaching. Although other matters were presented concerning which he desired others to be persuaded, ultimately his desire was that the Jews would be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, and that the Gentiles would be persuaded that salvation was to be found in none other than Jesus.

Although we are now thoroughly convinced that Paul used persuasion, it was Paul who reminded the Corinthians – and us – that ultimately, the message of Paul was not empowered through “persuasive words of human wisdom,” but by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4). As a result, we should not shy away from using persuasive arguments, reasoning, and speech, but we should never depend on the power of our persuasiveness to bring a person to Christ. The divinely empowered message of the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation for everyone.