

We Persuade Men

Intro: 2 Corinthians 5:11 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.” This short phrase, *we persuade men*, contains many valuable lessons. Some of those lessons can be learned by stressing each word.

I. WE

A. 2 Cor. 4:7 ⁷ “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

1. The treasure of the Gospel is in earthen vessels—men.
2. Angels, the Holy Spirit, or Christ are not given the privilege of delivering the Gospel to the world.
3. It was given to “earthen vessels.”
4. Even when there was incidental miraculous involvement, it was still taught by man.
 - a. Ethiopian eunuch; Acts 8
 - (1) Acts 8:26 ²⁶ “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.”
 - (2) Philip is the one who preached to him; Acts 8:35 ³⁵ “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”
 - b. Saul of Tarsus; Acts 9
 - (1) The Lord appeared to him; Acts 9:4-5 ⁴ “And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁵ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard* for thee to kick against the pricks.”
 - (2) The Lord did not tell him what to do; Acts 9:6 ⁶ “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”
 - (3) The Lord sent Ananias to him to tell him what to do.
 - c. Cornelius: Acts 10
 - (1) An angel appeared to him telling him to send for Peter; Acts 10:3, 5 ³ “He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. ⁴ And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. ⁵ And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:”
 - (2) Peter comes and tells him what to do:
 - (a) Acts 10:6 ⁶ “He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”
 - (b) Acts 11:14 ¹⁴ “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

B. New Testament writers considered human instrumentality a vital link in the chain that saves.

1. 1 Cor. 1:21 ²¹ “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”
2. Rom. 10:13-17 ¹³ “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? ¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
3. Jam. 5:20 ²⁰ “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

II. PERSUADE

A. We cannot force men to be Christians.

1. God rules the material universe by force.
2. He does not rule man by force but persuasion.
3. God stands at the door of man's heart and knocks; Rev. 3:20 ²⁰ "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

B. The Scriptures show that God deals with man on the principle of man having the ability to accept.

1. God created man as a free moral agent: the ability to choose.
2. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit.
 - a. Satan tempted her.
 - b. Gen. 3:6 ⁶ "And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."
3. Cain and Abel:
 - a. Abel chose to offer an acceptable sacrifice.
 - b. Cain:
 - (1) Chose not to offer an acceptable sacrifice.
 - (2) Chose to murder Abel.
 - (3) Gen. 4:7 ⁷ "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."
4. Jos. 24:15 ¹⁵ "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
5. Acts 2:40 ⁴⁰ "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

C. The persuasion to bring men to Christ is by teaching.

1. John 6:44-45 ⁴⁴ "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
2. Paul beseeched, pleaded with, others; Rom. 12:1 ¹ "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service."
3. If they cannot be won by teaching, then it is not possible to truly win them.

III. MEN

A. We do not try and persuade God.

1. God is Supreme.
2. God's persuasive message is directed to man.
3. God is mindful of man.
 - a. God shows more interest in him than in all the stars that shine; Heb. 2.
 - b. So much so that He gave His Son for man.
 - (1) John 3:16 ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - (2) Rom. 5:8 ⁸ "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

B. It is a matter of reconciling man to God, not God to man.

1. God has not moved; man did.
 - a. God does not change:
 - b. Mal. 3:6 “*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*”
 - c. Jam. 1:17 “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*”
2. 2 Cor. 5:20 “*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*”
3. Acts 26:28 “*Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*”

IV. WHAT DID PAUL PERSUADE MEN TO BE?**A. Paul persuaded men to be Christians.**

1. Acts 26:28 “*Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*”
2. Paul, nor the Scriptures, persuade men to join some denomination.
 - a. Paul did not attempt to make one a Paulite, or any other type of “ite” (church of Christite, Campbellite, etc.).
 - b. 1 Cor. 1:11-13 “*For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. ¹²Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. ¹³Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*”

B. Christians: nothing more and nothing less.**V. WHY PAUL PERSUADED MEN.****A. The Lord’s terror.****B. An attribute of God men often overlook.**

1. Rom. 11:22 “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*”
 - a. God is good and merciful when He can be.
 - b. God is severe when He has to be.
2. This is seen throughout the Old Testament.
 - a. Garden of Eden (Gen. 2-3).
 - (1) Shows God’s goodness in what He provided for man.
 - (2) Man’s expulsion from the garden shows His severity.
 - b. The flood (Gen. 6-9).
 - (1) God’s goodness in saving Noah and his family.
 - (2) God’s severity in destroying the world.
 - c. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah but saving righteous Lot (Gen. 18-19).
 - d. Saving the children of Israel but the destruction of the Egyptians (Exo. 3-15).
 - e. Illustrations continue throughout the Old Testament that shows God is both merciful and severe.

C. Day of Judgment.

1. No doubt, this is what Paul had in mind when he said “the terror of the Lord.”
2. Acts 24:25 “*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*”
3. Heb. 10:27-31 “*But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ²⁹Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him that hath said,*

Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. ³¹ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”

4. Heb. 12:25, 29 ^{“25} See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: ²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. ²⁷ And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: ²⁹ For our God *is a consuming fire.*”
5. 2 The. 1:6-9 ^{“6} Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”
6. 2 Cor. 5:10 ^{“10} For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done in his body*, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.”
7. Heb. 2:1-3 ^{“1} Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. ² For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; ³ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;”

Conclusion: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, will you not be persuaded to become a Christian and a Christian only?