

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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Reasonable Christianity

Christianity is not a refuge for people who want to check their brains at the door.

It is a reasonable belief system with a solid historical foundation—if we're willing to learn it.

*"Then Paul . . . **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead . . . And some of them were **persuaded** . . ." (Ac. 17:2-4).*

*"And he **reasoned** in the synagogue every Sabbath, and **persuaded** both Jews and Greeks" (Ac. 18:4).*

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



Critics accuse Christians of embracing their faith blindly, shunning reason or evidence as unnecessary, even dangerous. Unfortunately, many Christians validate that claim by their ignorance of the most basic Bible doctrines.

All three texts above—describing Paul's work in Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus, respectively—use a pair of verbs that challenge critics and shallow believers alike. The Greek word translated "reason" in these verses means "to converse, discourse with one, argue, dis-

cuss" (Thayer). The word translated "persuade" means "to induce one by words to believe" (Thayer).

This language suggests that Paul did not seek to convert his listeners by coercion, or bribery, or appeals to mystical experiences. Instead, he sought to convert them using the same tools of logic and evidentiary reasoning that are used to establish any scientific or historical truth. His listeners were persuaded by the power of the propositional argumentation he presented to them.

This Biblical model offers two important lessons for our consideration.

First, Christianity is a reasonable faith. It involves truth claims that are subject to evaluation and examination. Christianity can be, and ought to be, defended using the same kind of rigorous intellectual argumentation, debate, discussion, and reasoning that is used to defend any other truth claim. Examine the work of William Lane Craig, Ravi Zacharias, Tim Keller, John Lennox, Frank Turek, and a host of other very capable modern apologists to see that defense in action.

But if Christianity is a reasonable belief system, why isn't everyone persuaded by it? For the same reason that science, history, and other disciplines are riddled with their own controversies. All humans are subject to prejudices and biases that affect our ability to recognize the truth when we face it. It takes an honest heart to dispassionately consider a contrary position—and a courageous heart to change course as a result of that process. Few people have such a heart.

Second, Paul's example stands as a rebuke to the many Christians whose faith is indeed blind. They are incapable of mounting the simplest argument in support of their convictions. Their religion is little more than a cultural relic, carried along by a lifetime of tradition and habit. Such "faith" is easy to mock when skeptics encounter it.

Paul was a militant apologist for the faith because he knew he lived in a hostile culture. He *had* to be prepared to defend what he believed. Increasingly, we live in such a culture, too. We must prepare ourselves to persuade others by reasoned discourse.

— David King