

Almost Persuaded

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help, and the Lord guiding us, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, Acts chapter 26, Acts chapter 26, and we're going to look at the whole passage, or skim through it, but we're going to take as our text, Acts chapter 26, and if we read again at verse 24, Acts chapter 26 at verse 24, and as he, that is Paul, was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are out of your mind, your great learning is driving you out of your mind, but Paul said, I'm not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I'm speaking through and rational words, for the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly, for I'm persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. King Agrippa said to Paul, in a short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian, or as some other versions put it, you almost persuade me to become a Christian. You almost persuade me to become a Christian. Almost persuaded. And when we think about the word almost, it's a word that we use often. I'm sure we use it almost every day. And we say, well, I almost missed my appointment, I almost lost my temper, I almost said something I shouldn't have said, I almost burnt the dinner, dinner is almost ready.
- [2 : 0 6] But you know, the word almost, it's quite a sad word. Especially when it's used in the context, in this context, of Christianity and becoming a Christian. Because to describe someone as an almost Christian is a sad description of anyone, especially someone in here. Because to be an almost Christian means that you're not quite a Christian. You're very nearly a Christian. You're just about a Christian. You're not far from being a Christian. You're bordering on being a Christian. You're more or less a Christian. You're on the edge of becoming a Christian. You're close to becoming a Christian. But my friend, being an almost Christian is a sad position to be in. Because being close to the kingdom of heaven is not close enough. You have to enter the kingdom of heaven. And you have to enter by submitting your life to Jesus Christ and by becoming a committed Christian.
- [3 : 2 2] But what we see this evening in the person of King Herod Agrippa is someone who was an almost Christian. He was almost persuaded by Paul to become a Christian. But instead of committing his life to Jesus Christ, Agrippa decided to remain unconvinced and uncommitted. And as I said this morning, we are looking at two men who didn't take the advice that they were given. Because the advice that they were given was given by the Apostle Paul and he was telling them to seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near.

But these two men, one being the Roman governor Felix, we saw him this morning, and the other being the king of the state, Herod Agrippa, they both refused to listen to Paul's advice and decided that it would be better for them to remain uncommitted until a later date.

And this morning, as we said, we were considering Felix in chapter 24. And we called Felix Mr. Inconvenient. Because even though he had an interest in the gospel, for Felix it was inconvenient to commit his life to following Jesus.

[4 : 40] And it was inconvenient because when he was confronted with the cost of discipleship, he thought it was too much. Felix thought it was too much for him to give up his momentary lifestyle of worldly pleasures.

Felix was Mr. Inconvenient. But this evening we're considering King Agrippa, who was Mr. Unconvinced. Mr. Unconvinced.

Because King Agrippa was unconvinced that becoming a Christian and committing his life to Jesus Christ, he was unconvinced that that's what he really wanted.

King Agrippa was almost there. He was on the verge of commitment. He was close to becoming a Christian. But he wasn't close enough.

Being an almost Christian, my friend, it isn't the same as being a committed Christian. And so let's consider this man, Mr. Unconvinced, and see why King Agrippa remained as an almost Christian.

[5 : 44] And I'd like us to just look at this passage that we read, and I'd like us to look at it under three headings. Petition, permission, and persuasion.

Petition, permission, and persuasion. So if we look at, first of all, at petition. Petition. Go back to chapter 25 and verse 13, where we began reading.

It says, These verses, verses 13 to 15, they reintroduce us to the characters and the context of this passage.

Because as we saw this morning in chapter 24, Paul was under arrest by the Roman authorities. And he was standing trial for accusations made against him by the Jewish leaders.

The Jewish leaders claimed that Paul had caused an uproar in the temple at Jerusalem. But when the Roman authorities heard of this uproar, they diffused the situation and they broke up all the fighting.

[7 : 12] And they sought to understand why Paul was being beaten by the Jews and why the Jews wanted to kill him. And as we saw this morning, Paul was then sent from Jerusalem, where the chaos was, to Caesarea.

And he was to stand trial there before Felix. And Felix then was the Roman governor. But instead of siding with the Jews, Felix was, as we saw this morning, he was impressed with Paul's defense of the gospel.

And so he adjourned Paul's trial. And he gave the excuse to the Jews that he would express this form of judgment against Paul at a later date. But that later date, it never came.

Because at the end of chapter 24, the Roman governor Felix, we're told, he was succeeded by a man called Festus. And Festus, he's the other character we see in this context.

Because when Festus succeeded Felix to the position of Roman governor in Judea, Paul was still in prison. Paul had been in prison for two years by that point.

[8 : 18] And, well, Felix, while Paul was in prison, Felix had enjoyed Paul's gospel. And so he kept him in prison. But when Festus came on the scene, Festus didn't want the dealings of his predecessor hanging over him.

So he sought to do something about Paul as soon as possible. And we're told at the beginning of this chapter, chapter 25, that only three days into his new job, Festus had just started his new job.

And he goes straight up to Jerusalem to see what he can do about Paul. And when he reached Jerusalem, Festus was met by many of the Jewish leaders. And they still wanted Paul dealt with.

Over two years had passed, but nothing had changed for them. They hadn't forgotten what the last Roman governor had done to them, that he had just fobbed them off and sent them back to Jerusalem.

And they didn't want this Roman governor to do the same. The Jewish leaders wanted Paul dealt with once and for all. They wanted Paul dead for preaching about a resurrected Savior.

[9 : 25] And after all this time with Paul still in prison, these Jewish leaders, they're still holding a grudge against Paul. They hadn't forgotten the past. They hadn't changed a bit.

They were still digging their heels in. And they were still determined to get rid of Paul. And you know, we can be like that so often. We can hold grudges against people.

And we can cling to something that may have happened in the past, the distant past. And we can keep bringing it up to, well, and keep reusing it as ammo.

And we can keep holding on to it and refuse to let it go. But that's not the example set down in Scripture. And if anyone knew that, it was the Jewish leaders themselves.

They knew that they were to emulate and to imitate their God, who is a God of grace and mercy and peace. They knew that they were to emulate and imitate the character of God.

[10 : 26] A God who doesn't hold grudges against his people, but forgives their sin and chooses to even remember their sin no more. Because when God forgives our sin, when we confess our sin, he forgives our sin, he doesn't keep bringing it back up.

If we fall into sin again, he doesn't remind us, oh, you did that in the past. He doesn't throw it back in our face. No, he forgives us. When he forgives us, he remembers it no more.

He chooses never to remember it. And that's the great promise of the Bible. If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The slate is wiped clean. It's not going to be brought up again. And we're told why? Why? Because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. But what's clear about this passage is that the Jewish leaders, they weren't acting like God, and they weren't acting in God's name.

They were just acting according to their own pride. Because their pride had been hurt when Felix didn't listen to their case against Paul. And so Festus tells these Jewish leaders to come down to Caesarea again.

[11 : 46] Come down again and make a second case against Paul. But when they came, Paul was ready. Paul was ready to make another defense.

And again, he argued that he had done nothing against the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar. And as a Roman citizen, Paul made this petition.

I appeal to Caesar. I appeal to Caesar. Paul made this petition. And so now Festus has this headache because he has to send Paul to Rome to face trial before Caesar.

But he doesn't know what to say about Paul and why he's sending him. Because to Festus, none of this made sense. He didn't understand any of it.

He wasn't really interested in what was going on. He wasn't interested in this controversy between the Jews and Paul. It didn't make any sense to him. He just wanted to get rid of Paul.

[12 : 46] He just wanted Paul out of his sight. But then we see here at the beginning of this passage that into all this mix of Felix and Festus, into the mix comes King Herod Agrippa and Bernice.

Now King Herod Agrippa was King Herod Agrippa II. And Bernice was not her. But they were not husband and wife. But they were actually brother and sister.

And their other sister was actually Drusilla. He was married to Felix, who we saw in chapter 24. So there was Agrippa, Bernice, and Drusilla.

They're all from one family. And their father was Agrippa's predecessor, Herod Agrippa I. And Herod Agrippa I, he was the man who was eaten by worms in Acts chapter 12.

You can read about that for yourself. But their granduncle, Herod Antipas, he was the man who beheaded John the Baptist. And the man who mocked Jesus before he was crucified.

[13 : 50] And what's even more interesting about this family, or looking at their family tree, is that their great-grandfather was Herod the Great. And he sought to get rid of Jesus the moment he was born.

You remember when Herod the Great tried to get rid of all the male children under the age of two. And so Agrippa, Bernice, and Drusilla, they're from this family who were well acquainted with Jesus.

In fact, this family hated Jesus. And they supported the opposition of the Jews towards Jesus and any of Jesus' followers. And so when Agrippa and Bernice turned up in the palace of Festus, the Jews probably thought they had it all in the bag.

Because the Jews knew that their king and all his family, they knew that they hated anything to do with Jesus and his followers. But as Festus explains to Agrippa and Bernice about this difficult situation, this headache he's got, Agrippa is intrigued and he wants to hear Paul speak for himself.

But you know, for Festus, he couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. He couldn't understand why the Jews had it in for Paul.

[15 : 04] Festus didn't really know where this controversy with Paul came from because, well, he didn't really care. He didn't care about Paul's theology and Paul's views on the resurrection.

And for Festus, it just seemed like this petty dispute, as he says himself, a petty dispute about a certain Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul claims to be alive.

Festus couldn't see the problem. He thought that Paul was entitled to his opinion about Jesus. And that in the grand scheme of things, well, it didn't really matter what Paul preached about because it wasn't doing any harm to the Jews or to anyone else.

And you know, even though this is the first century that we're looking at here in the book of Acts, we could describe Festus as a postmodernist. Because a postmodernist, as a postmodernist, Festus believed that there was no absolute truth.

And everyone is entitled to their own opinion so long as it doesn't hurt anyone or encroach upon their space or cause fighting. Therefore, in his mind, Paul's truth about this certain Jesus was his truth.

[16 : 21] And for the Jews, the Jews' truth about this certain Jesus, that was their truth. Your truth is your truth. My truth is my truth. And as long as both parties are happy with what they believed, there's no need for a dispute.

They had to just agree to disagree. And that's the mindset of, well, the 20th and the 21st century. It's the postmodern mindset.

Where they claim that there's no absolute truth. So, no one can say that I'm right, you're wrong. Everybody's either right or everybody's either wrong.

And everyone should just, well, we should all just live peaceably with one another and keep our views to ourselves. And so our postmodern generation, it tells us that if you want to be a Christian, keep it to yourself.

Keep it to yourself. Keep your theology and your religion, keep it to yourself. Cover it up. Hide it. Don't let anyone know. Don't show it to anyone and don't impose your views on anyone else.

[17 : 23] Let's live in peace with one another. Regardless of the truth. But, you know, the corruption of the postmodern mindset is that it undermines the Great Commission of Jesus.

The Great Commission is to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Proclaim this message to every living creature. And because of that Great Commission, as we shall see in the next section, Paul didn't care much about postmodernism.

He didn't care much about keeping the gospel to himself. He wanted everyone to know the absolute truth about Jesus Christ. He wanted everyone he came into contact with to know about this Jesus, this certain Jesus who was dead but is now alive again.

But, you know, Festus was not only a postmodernist who didn't believe in absolute truth. He was also a very ignorant Roman governor. Because his lack of knowledge about Jesus, it shows that he was nothing like his predecessor.

As we saw this morning, Felix was well acquainted with Christianity and he was interested in the gospel. Felix was interested. But the predecessor of Felix was Pilate.

[18 : 49] And Pilate, as you know, met Jesus. Pilate held conversations with Jesus. Pilate saw Jesus face to face. Pilate knew in his heart that Jesus was an innocent man and Pilate had even heard about the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

But what we see is that in only three generations, three generations of Roman governor you could say, it had gone from meeting Jesus to being well acquainted with Jesus to knowing absolutely nothing about Jesus.

And that's just what it's like today. Just what it's like today. Because a previous generation went to church and knew Jesus and followed Jesus and they were committed to Jesus.

They were committed 100%. They knew the gospel to be the absolute truth. But then you have those, maybe, if I can put it this way, those of you in the 60 plus bracket, your generation, they were well acquainted with Jesus.

They still are well acquainted because they grew up with the gospel. You grew up with the gospel. You went to church. You were baptized. You were taught to do certain things because that's what the previous generation did, keep the Sabbath.

[20 : 07] And all these different things you were told and taught. But sadly, you look at today's generation. It's growing up like Festus with no knowledge of Jesus at all and no interest in the absolute truth.

Because this generation lives in a world where it's proclaimed from the rooftops that there is no absolute truth. And everyone can live as they please and do as they please and live as they like as long as it makes them happy.

As long as it makes them happy. But my Christian friend, whilst we have freedom and whilst we have the opportunity, we must continue to pass on the absolute truth to those who are lost.

Whilst we have permission to speak freely. Whilst we have freedom of speech, we have to continue to go into the world with this precious gospel.

Whilst we have the opportunity, we have to take the opportunity. And that's what we see Paul doing here. He had made his petition, I appeal to Caesar.

[21 : 23] But what we see secondly is that Agrippa granted Paul permission to speak freely. So we look at petition and now permission.

permission. Permission. Look at verse 22 in chapter 25. It says, Then Agrippa said to Festus, I would like to hear the man myself.

Tomorrow, said he, you will hear him. So on the next day, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city.

Then at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. And Festus said, King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

And so what we see here is that Festus gave King Agrippa and his sister Bernice an opportunity to hear Paul speak for himself. And Festus wanted to hear Paul speak to King Agrippa because he didn't think that Paul's actions were worthy of death.

[22 : 38] But because Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus had to indicate the charges that were being made against Paul, but he didn't know what to write. He didn't know what cover letter to send Paul with.

And Festus hoped that Agrippa would help him write something to Caesar. And you know, we have to be aware that this friendship between Festus and Agrippa, it was quite unusual because Festus was a Roman and he was a Roman governor of Judea.

But King Herod Agrippa, he wasn't king over the whole of Israel. He was only king and ruler over the province of Judea. And so you could say that they ruled the same area, the same area in Israel, but one was a Roman one was a Jew.

And the Romans and the Jews, they didn't usually get on with one another because the Jews, as we said this morning, they were under the Roman authority. They were part of the Roman Empire. And because of this, they had to pay tax to Caesar.

And you could say, well, the Herod, he was pretty much just a public figure to keep the Jews happy. He had no real authority because everyone was under the authority of Rome.

[23 : 52] You could say that the Herod was actually a puppet to the Romans just to ensure peace and stability in the land. But because Festus didn't really understand the controversy between Paul and the Jews, he needed this Jewish king to hear Paul's case and decide what to do with Paul.

And so we're told at the beginning of chapter 26 that Agrippa gives Paul permission to speak freely. He's given the freedom of speech.

And when Paul stands up to address the auditorium, he first of all thanks Agrippa for the permission to speak and Agrippa's willingness to listen to him and let him speak.

Because Paul knows that King Agrippa isn't ignorant like the Roman governor, Festus. Paul knows that Agrippa understands all these controversies and these differences between the Jews and the Christians.

Paul knows that Agrippa is well aware of Christianity and its message of a risen saviour. And so as Paul begins to speak to the auditorium, full of both Jews and Romans, you know, it's interesting that he doesn't give this theological lecture on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 09] Nor does he enter into a theological debate with the Jews about the validity of the resurrection. Instead, Paul speaks about something that no one can question, but everyone has the evidence that a change has taken place.

And that's because Paul tells Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, and this whole auditorium, Paul tells them his testimony. And he testifies to the power of the resurrection by explaining the change that has taken place in his life.

Paul witnessed to the absolute truth of the gospel and the difference that Jesus can make in someone's life. And you know, by telling his testimony about, and about his personal encounter with Jesus, it was more powerful and more influential than any theological discussion or debate.

And I don't know about you, but I love listening to testimonies. I'm looking forward to Ishbal's testimony tonight, as I look forward to every testimony that we hear.

Because before I was converted, I used to love going to the YM on a Sunday evening. And I would listen to someone speak about how the Lord came into their life, how the Lord worked in their life.

[26 : 35] And with every testimony I listened to, the more I listened to, the more I wanted my own testimony. I wanted to be able, like the person, whoever it was standing at the front, whoever was speaking, I wanted to be able to testify like them to the work of Jesus in my life and tell people how Jesus came into my life and how I came to know the Lord.

And maybe you're like that tonight. Maybe you want to have your own testimony and your own story of how the Lord opened your heart and changed your life and brought you from darkness into his marvellous light.

But you know, there's one thing about testimonies and that is that they must testify to what the Lord has done. And not what we have done. Because a testimony, it's not about reminiscing in the past and what we got up to and what we did when we were lost and without Christ.

Our testimony is not about testifying only to our former life. No, a testimony is to trace the Lord's hand in our lives to make others see the wonder of salvation.

To make them see the beauty of what Jesus does in the life of an individual. And you know, that's what we were singing about in Psalm 40. David, the psalmist, he's telling us his testimony and he testifies to the Lord's work in his life.

[28 : 07] And David says, as you know it, I'm sure you know it well yourselves, I waited for the Lord and patiently did bear. At length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear.

David was crying out to the Lord to be saved. And David then tells us, he took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way.

But he not only did that, says David, he put a new song in my mouth. Our God to magnify. And when I stand on this rock he says, many shall see it and shall fear and on the Lord rely.

Many shall see the change in my life he say. People will look at me and think, that man's converted. That man has changed. And David's desire in telling his testimony, it wasn't to boast about his past.

It was only to boast in the Lord and in the power of the resurrection. The resurrection of coming from death in sin to life in Christ.

[29 : 13] David's desire was that those reading and those singing, that's us, those singing Psalm 40 would come to know and experience the Lord's salvation for themselves.

And you know, that's what Paul is doing here before this great crowd of Agrippa and Bernice and Festus. Paul is testifying to the work of Jesus in his life and he's seeking to point all these unbelievers to this wonderful Savior.

And you know, even though Paul's conversion was, and as we've read, it was a Damascus Road experience, he says himself that he saw this bright light and he heard a voice from heaven speaking directly to him.

even though Paul's conversion was that Damascus Road experience, his testimony and conversion is not the testimony and conversion of every Christian because every conversion and every testimony is different.

There's no fixed way of being converted because the Lord draws us in all different ways. He uses different means and different people and different experiences.

[30 : 26] And yes, some people do have the Damascus Road experience where they're converted in a church service or through a testimony, but that conversion is very real because most people have this gradual conversion where they're drawn slowly and over time they're made to realize that the life that they've been living, it's empty without Jesus.

They're made to see that there's something missing and they need that something in their life and they know that it's Jesus. And there are also other people who have always wanted to be a Christian and from a young age they love Jesus and they never knew a time in their life when they didn't love Jesus.

My friend, every conversion is different and every testimony is different but the end result is the same because every Christian comes to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over their life.

But there's one thing we ought to never do and that is to wait for the Damascus Road experience. We're not to wait for a sign from heaven to prove that God exists and that God loves us.

Jesus says that those who seek a sign, no sign shall be given. Because God has already demonstrated his love towards us.

[31 : 54] He has already given us the sign in the death of Jesus Christ. Which means that we're not to wait for the sign. We're not to wait for a better time or a more convenient season to seek the Lord.

We're not to wait for the bright light or the voice from heaven speaking directly to us. No my friend, as we were saying this morning, we're just to come now. We're to come now.

Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Why put off until tomorrow what you can do today? Why put it off any longer?

Don't seek the sign. Just come today. That's what we're being told in the gospel. You know, that was Paul's desire as he told his personal testimony. He wanted Agrippa to be persuaded that committing his life to Jesus Christ was the best decision he would ever make.

And Paul explains to Agrippa that he wasn't always a Christian because he was brought up as a Jew and he lived his life as a Pharisee. And Paul says that in order to please the God of his imagination, he imprisoned Christians and he banished them to foreign cities and he tried to make them recant their Christian faith.

[33 : 13] And he even encouraged their deaths. And Paul says I was enraged by Christians. I hated Christians. I wanted to blot them out completely. But then he says when I was going down to Damascus Jesus met me.

Jesus met me and he stopped me and he brought me to my knees and he changed my life and he came into my heart. And Paul says this Jesus whom I spent my life persecuting he became my Lord and my Saviour.

But not only that says Paul Jesus gave me a message to preach. Because Jesus said to me I am sending you to open the eyes of the blind so that they may turn from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith.

Paul says this is why the Jews are against me. They're against me for preaching the gospel. and yet I have said nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass.

And what did the prophets and Moses say? He says that the Christ must suffer and that by being the first to rise from the dead he would proclaim light both to our people the Jews and to the Gentiles.

[34 : 35] And Paul was saying to this Jewish king Herod Agrippa this is what our Old Testament prophesied. This is what was foreshadowed in the law and the prophets.

This is what was promised to us that Christ must suffer and rise from the dead and proclaim light to our people the Jews and to all the corners of the earth.

And Paul is saying this is the good news. This is the gospel. This is our hope for salvation that Jesus Christ was condemned in our place and he rose again for our justification.

And so as Paul is given permission to tell his testimony he's completely persuaded that Jesus Christ is Lord and the only saviour of sinners.

But it's not so clear if his audience is as persuaded as Paul. They don't seem as persuaded as him. And so let's look at this last section together.

[35 : 40] Persuasion. We've considered petition, petition, permission and lastly persuasion. Persuasion. We look at again at verse 24 in Acts chapter 26.

And as he was saying these things in his defence Festus said with a loud voice Paul you're out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you out of your mind. But Paul said I am not out of my mind most excellent Festus but I am speaking through unrational words.

For the king knows about these things and to him I speak boldly for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice for this has not been done in a corner.

As Paul is telling his testimony Festus interrupts Paul and butts in and he claims that what he's hearing from Paul is complete madness.

And he says Festus says twice Paul you're out of your mind. You're going mad. This is insanity to believe that this man called Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross so that people's sins could be forgiven.

[36 : 53] It's madness that after that Jesus had died for so-called sinners. It's madness to think that he's now rose again from the dead. Paul you're out of your mind.

You're going mad. It's insanity for anyone to believe this. Post-modern Festus you could say he's had enough. And he tells Paul exactly what he thinks of his gospel.

And he says that your truth about Jesus is nonsense. It's rubbish. It's a fairy tale. It's make believe. It's just a crutch to get to help people get through life and all the atrocities and ills of this life.

It's not real. It's not true. It's not genuine. It's madness. It's insanity. It's absolute foolishness. Then Paul just responds by saying I am not out of my mind.

I am speaking true and rational words. But you know these harsh words of Festus they must have influenced Paul when he wrote in 1 Corinthians.

[37 : 57] because when Paul wrote to the church in Corinth there were many people like Festus who claimed that the gospel of a crucified saviour a crucified and risen saviour they claimed that it was foolishness.

And Paul affirmed that by saying the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us who are saved it is the power of God.

And even though the Jews he says even though they demand a sign and the Gentiles they seek wisdom he says we preach Christ crucified because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

And what Paul meant by this was that the world might look at the death and resurrection of Jesus like Festus did and call it foolishness. But that foolishness says Paul it is the wonder and it is the beauty of salvation.

It's the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God is Christ and him crucified. But what we see in this passage is that Paul turns his attention away from this foolish Festus who's on his hobby horse and he turns his attention to Agrippa because Paul knows that Agrippa is not like Festus.

[39 : 15] He doesn't just shrug it off and say that it's nonsense. Paul knows that Agrippa is well aware of this Jesus who was crucified and whom Christians claimed to be risen from the dead.

Because Paul says to him none of these things were done in a corner. The crucifixion of Jesus it wasn't done privately and out of sight and out of mind.

The crucifixion of Jesus was a public humiliation and crucifixion carried out on Calvary's hill. And Paul says it was your predecessor your grand uncle who mocked Jesus and encouraged his crucifixion.

It was under the authority and power that you now hold as king in Judea that sent this Jesus to the cross. And Paul says down in verse 27 King Agrippa do you believe the prophets?

I know that you believe. I know that you believe the prophets he said because the prophets said that Christ must suffer. He must be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

[40 : 25] That the chastisement of our peace must be laid upon him and with his stripes we will be healed. The prophet Isaiah said that Christ must suffer and the prophet David King David whose throne you now occupy he spoke about the resurrection of Jesus in Psalm 16 you will not leave my soul in the grave nor will you allow your holy one to see corruption and Paul is saying to Agrippa I know you believe the scriptures and what they say about Jesus I know that you believe the prophets I know that you believe that Christ must suffer and rise from the dead I know that you believe that he must proclaim light to the Jews and to the Gentiles I know that you believe he says I know that you believe but you know it must have broken Paul's heart it must have broken his heart when Agrippa responded to him looking at

Paul and said well you almost persuade me to become a Christian must have broke his heart you almost persuade me to become a Christian must have gone through Paul says to Agrippa that his longing is that Paul would become that Agrippa would become a Christian says in verse 29 Paul says whether short or long I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am a Christian except for these chains his longing was that he would become a Christian but sadly after hearing the gospel Agrippa was willing to walk away from Paul as someone who was almost persuaded and as I said it must have broken Paul's heart to know that

Agrippa believed what Paul was saying he believed the message of the prophets he believed what Paul was saying and yet he refused to commit his life to Jesus Christ and you know I say that it must have broken Paul's heart because it breaks mind it breaks mind to know that you believe what you hear from this pulpit breaks my heart that you continually refuse to commit your life to Jesus Christ after all that you hear you still refuse it breaks my heart to see you throw away yet another gospel opportunity when tomorrow is not promised to you it breaks my heart to know that every day you go without Christ as your saviour your life is being suspended by a slender thread over the mouth of hell do you realise that do you realise that because the bible reminds us solemnly there is but one step between life and death one step the slender thread and like

Paul I can say to you tonight I know you believe I know you believe the bible to be true I know you believe the truth about the gospel I know that you believe what you hear week by week I know that you believe it I know you believe and yet you still remain as one who is only almost persuaded almost persuaded you believe but you're not committed not committed you're an almost Christian an almost Christian and as we said earlier that's a sad description of anyone particularly someone in here because to be an almost Christian means that you're not quite a Christian you're not you're very nearly a Christian you're just about a Christian you're not far from being a Christian you're bordering on being a Christian you're more or less a Christian you're close but not close enough close but not close enough my friend my friend I must remind you that every almost

Christian that ever lived they died and woke up in hell every almost Christian dies and wakes up in hell because being an almost Christian or being close to the kingdom of heaven is not close enough you have to enter the kingdom of heaven you have to submit to Jesus Christ you have to commit your life as a Christian you have to be a committed Christian you can't continue being an almost Christian you can't the last question I just want to leave you with time is gone but time is short I want to leave you with this one question

[46 : 20] I want you to think about it this week the question is very simply whatever is leaving you as an almost Christian tonight are you going to let it take you to a lost eternity in hell whatever is leaving you as an almost Christian tonight are you going to let it take you to a lost eternity in hell do not be almost persuaded but fully persuaded that this Jesus received sinners may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious

God we give thanks to thee for the beauty of the gospel that it is able to be told even in our lives that as thy people testify to it to the wonder of what Jesus can do that he saves to the uttermost that he plucks us as brands from the burning that he draws us with cords that cannot be broken that he brings us from darkness into his own marvelous light all that none of us would be almost persuaded but that each and every one of us would confess like the apostle when he said for I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers neither height nor depth nor any other creature is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord all that we would be persuaded of the love that has been demonstrated to us in and through thy son Jesus and help us to run to him to flee the wrath to come and to seek the

Lord while he's to be found and call upon him while he is near go before us Lord we pray bless our time together in fellowship one with another as we hear of Ishmael's testimony we pray that all that our time would be blessed together that everything that is said and done on this thy day would be to thy glory to the furtherance of thy kingdom and to lift up the precious name of Jesus cleanse us then we pray for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake Amen we shall conclude by singing in Psalm 25 Psalm 25 page 231 Psalm 25 we're singing from verse 4 down to the verse mark 9 show me thy ways O Lord thy paths so teach thou me and do thou lead me in thy truth that in my teacher be for thou art God that does to me salvation send and I upon thee all the day expecting to attend down to the verse mark 9 of

Psalm 25 to God's praise to me thy ways O Lord thy path so teach thou me me and who I'll be in thy life new earth than my teacher be for thou art called at us to me salvation shall set I lie upon me all the day expecting to attend thy tender mercies

Lord I pray thee to remember my loving kindnesses for thee have been whole forever forever my sins and faults of youth do the Lord forget after thy mercy think thy mercy think for me and for thy goodness great God good and upright is the hope the wailed sinners show the me can judgment he will guide and make his path to

[52 : 15] Lord take his path to Lord the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen