

Almost Persuaded

Acts 25-26

Icebreaker: *What things make you emotional?*

Two years have passed since Paul was on trial before Felix in last week's lesson. The men who vowed not to eat until Paul was dead (Acts 23:12) were probably pretty hungry at this point! Paul is still in prison awaiting trial under Festus, the new ruler.

Acts 24:27-25:12

Festus is in a lose-lose situation.

What is the outcome of saying Paul is guilty?

- He is condemning to death an innocent man

What is the outcome of declaring Paul innocent?

- The Jews in his territory will be very upset and he will "lose face."

Instead of making a decision he just leaves Paul in prison! Paul appeals to Caesar in order to get a fair trial in Rome. Herod Agrippa and his sister (and wife!) Bernice arrive. The Herod's family tree was notorious for not having many branches. They married their relatives pretty frequently. Agrippa was very familiar with the Jewish faith. His grandfather was Herod the Great and his father was the Herod who died in Acts 12.

Acts 25:22-27

Who seems like they are in control?

- The pomp & circumstance of these "leaders" would make it seem like Festus and Agrippa were in control.
- The fact that they commanded Paul to be brought in would make it seem like they were in control
- Paul's chains and following orders would make it seem like he was not in control.

Who is actually in control here?

- God—Despite how bad things look or who is bossing who around, ultimately God is the one with control.
- God is the one who told Paul he would be going to Rome in the first place.

How does knowing God is in control give us comfort when things get tough?

- We know God gets the final say and that what he says is best, even though it may not seem best to us.
- Paul will ultimately go to Rome and be executed. That was God's plan and Paul submitted to it.

In chapter 26 we have one of the most important speeches in the book of Acts. Paul delivers his testimony to Herod Agrippa and goes into more religious details because he knows he is more likely than Festus to understand it. Paul basically has three point sermon on the Gospel of Christ.

Point 1—Good intentions does not mean something is true (**Acts 26:9-18, 25**)

- *How is it possible to think you are doing the right thing and have good intentions but turn out to be wrong?*
 - Good intentions do not define right and wrong. Just because someone intends well does not mean what they did was the right thing or what they believed was the right thing.
 - Paul though persecuting the church was the right thing and he was wrong
- *How did Paul determine what the truth about Christ was?*
 - The truth came from Christ himself.
 - John 14:6—Jesus said he is the way, the **truth**, and the life.

Point 2—Once we see the truth we must understand the need to accept the truth and repent of our sins (**Acts 26:17-20**)

- *How is darkness and light a lot like truth and lies?*
- *Why does God want us to turn from darkness/lies to light/truth?*
- Notice the result of that in 26:18—forgiveness of sins
- Paul says that repentance should be reflected by our deeds. *How can our deeds reflect our repentance?*
 - When we repent we should not go back to doing those same evil things.
 - When you repent you need to replace the bad habits and behaviors with good ones.

Point 3—God has been trying to tell us about the resurrection all along (**Acts 26:22-23**)

- *Who in the Old Testament said that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead?*
 - Moses and the prophets

Didn't Lazarus and a sick girl and others rise from the dead before Jesus? Why is Jesus the real firstborn from the dead?

- All those other people died again but Jesus did not and will not (Romans 6:10 and 1 Peter 3:18)

Acts 26:24-32

What does Agrippa think Paul is trying to do?

- Use all that evidence and talk of repentance of ALL people to persuade him that Jesus is Lord.

Seeing the open door, what ironic thing does Paul say he wishes?

- That they, the rulers, could be like him, the man on trial.

What is it about Christianity that makes a beggar on level with a king?

- All that matters is our relationship with God and God is no respecter of persons. There are wealthy kings who are worse off than beggars because they do not know Jesus Christ.

What obstacles could Agrippa and others in high position face that could keep them from becoming a Christian?

Application:

Who is someone you can try to reach that may have seemed “out of your league” but maybe all you need is boldness?

What is the scariest part about turning from darkness and sin to light and truth in your life?

What open doors for evangelism can you pray God will open this week?