

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapters 26

Almost Persuaded!

Memory Verse: Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"

I. Introduction

- A. Persuasion today is left up to advertisers
- B. The greatest persuaders should be right here (Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 24:25)
- C. People are in need of instruction that convinces them that God is right, and to be whole-heartily followed (Mt 28:19,20)

II. Background

- A. At this point in Acts, the apostle Paul is no longer free, but is locked into a court battle for his life that has required him appealing to the supreme court of the Roman Empire, a hearing by Caesar Nero himself!
- B. Paul has been given an invitation to speak to a large crowd gathered around King Agrippa and his wife Bernice. Five generations are listed:
 1. King Herod the Great (Mt 2) - puppet king over Israel under Caesar. He met the wise men, and had all children in Bethlehem under the age of 2 murdered.
 2. Herod Archelaus (Mt 2:22). So wicked that the Roman empire had to dump him.
 3. Herod the Tetrarch, Atipas (Mt 14) - had John the Baptist beheaded. He was called "that old fox" by Jesus in Lk 13:22.
 4. Herod Agrippa (Act 12) - had the apostle James put to death
 5. Herod Agrippa II (Act 25-26) - the one before whom Paul now stands
- C. Paul could either be afraid for his life, or bold in his faith - he opts for the latter, hoping to convert this man to the grace of God for lost sinners by persuasion - THE greatest weapon of all time! Mightier than the sword!

III. Lesson - "Almost Persuaded!"

A. The Saint's Pleasure (26:1-23)

1. To be allowed to speak for Christ! Paul is allowed to speak (26:1-27) Begins to fulfill Acts 9:15 to its fullest.
 - a. Paul Introduces himself (26:1-7).
 - 1) _____. "I am happy!" Able to say that, even though in chains because:
 - a) Had a personal walk with the One who is in control
 - b) Was in the center of God's will for your life.
 - c) Was telling the wonderful story of Jesus!
 - d) He had developed this confidence by experience
 - 2) _____ (26:4-7) - well known by all the Jews
 - a) Searching for the truth all his life - honest search
 - i) As a believer of the Bible
 - ii) As a Pharisee
 - b) Finding the truth in the fulfillment of the promises, found in the Messiah, Christ Jesus!
 - b. Paul Presents the Gospel (Act 26:6-8)! The hope of Israel
 - 1) _____ - I stand before you because I KNOW what I believe - never a guess, or blind faith. Paul has a faith that propels him to risk his life to make it known world-wide!
 - 2) _____ I have a FUTURE to look forward to! Because:
 - a) The promises of God all relate to the fact of the miraculous resurrection - that is what a Bible believing Jew is SUPPOSED to believe!
 - i) Israel would be a great Nation
 - ii) A Messiah would come by means of king David
 - iii) A final sacrifice would come to finish the payment of for all sin
 - b) The Son of God, Jesus Christ is the proof of my future
 - i) He came to prove God cared, and was real
 - ii) He died to take away our punishment

iii) He arose to show that the way to God was clear

c) I am willing to believe it all, live by it, and die by it (most people would rather people rose up from an Amoebae, or an ape, than to believe the resurrection; Rom 10:9,10)!

It is sad when only cult fanatics have this kind of zeal!

c. _____ What about YOU Agrippa (26:8-23)?

1) Forget your religion (26:9-12) - I was "religious" but lost

- a) Protected my religion - like God needs protecting
- b) Persecuted the heretics - like they were not human
- c) Pursued the heretics to other countries - like a religious empire that sought only to keep people under their control - no individual faith or choice.

None of that SAVED my soul from sin or hell!

2) But then I got truly SAVED!!! (26:13-16)

- a) I was confronted by the living Christ - as God Almighty
- b) I was convicted by the "pricks" of the Holy Spirit - I was forced to admit:
 - i) My own arrogance, ignorance and hardheartedness
 - ii) My wrong - his conscience had "haunted" him!
- c) I was called upon to repent (change my direction) and live now for Christ
 - i) To call Jesus LORD (Rom 10:9,10,13; Philp 2:9-11) Jehovah
 - ii) To accept a whole new life that Christ had for him!

3) And then I got ENLISTED!!! (26:17,18) No longer an empty life, but one FILLED to overflowing!

- a) Going to people - and God protecting him
- b) Opening their eyes - reasoning, urging
- c) Turning them from darkness to God's Light
- d) Freeing them from Satan's power to God's power
- e) Enabling sinners to receive:
 - i) The forgiveness of their sins
 - ii) Inheritance (heaven) due all saints - no hierarchy

4) I have been busy ever since (26:19-22). Why did it matter?

- a) Disobedience means damnation - "I was not disobedient" (Acts 26:19)
 - i) Of the religious zealot Saul of Tarsus
 - ii) Of the religious Jews
 - iii) Of the world
- b) Obedience means hardship - people are being asked to repent, and go against "the flow"
- c) Faith means you are never alone while serving God

5) My message has never changed (26:22,23; Gal 1:6,7):

- a) The prophets and Moses were right - not myths
- b) The Messiah must suffer first, not reign
- c) The Messiah would be the first to rise from the dead, never to die again. Other resurrections were temporary
- d) The Gospel (the Light, good news) must be spread everywhere since it is TRUE!

B. **The Sinner's Confusion** - Paul is thought by Festus to be "mad" (26:24-26). Festus probably saw that Paul was "getting through" to the king, and tried to intervene (EX: my Dad when I talked to his Mom).

PRINCIPLE: People do not like Christians to talk because when they get talking about God, it gets convicting!

1. Thinking about all this can make a lot of sense, but concluding that it must just be madness - it can't really all be true (John 18:37,38)
 - a. You can't please people - either the Gospel is "too simple" or "too easy" or "too complicated." They will say it is something other than what they want
 - b. Festus recognizes that Paul's arguments make great sense, so attack PAUL and call him mad - don't dare deal with what Paul is saying! Skip over the truths!!!
2. Paul then goes for the heart.
 - a. Disregards any perceived confusion, and just goes right for the heart, knowing that people have enough understanding to believe or reject.
 - b. Says, "You know what I am talking about don't you King Agrippa? You believe don't you?" (26:27)

C. The Struggle of the Heart (26:28)!

1. First by Agrippa - "*almost becomes a Christian*"
 - a. Wonders by now, Who is the free man, and who is in chains?
 - b. However, almost is not enough. Almost, but lost. Almost cannot avail; Almost is but to fail! Sad, sad, that bitter wail - "Almost - but lost!" Almost a touchdown is never a touchdown. A "salvation" that almost gets you to heaven, will land you in hell.
2. Then by Paul! Paul's response is a broken heart! Paul says, "I wish EVERYONE was as I am." Can any other Christian say that?!

D. But it is on to Rome now (26:30-32)**IV. Conclusion - Review of the Principles****V. Study Questions**