

## Acts 25-26 Almost Persuaded

I feel like it has been forever since we have been in the book of Acts with Israel Trip/PD/Harvest Festival

A)At the end of Acts 24 we found Paul under house arrest in the seaport city of Caesarea

B)It's really a spectacular place to visit.

1)Herod the Great actually built it at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. It's an astounding work!

C)He actually invented hydraulic cement. He built a harbor. It was a phenomenal place then.

1)It's an amazing place to see now.

D)Paul has been there now in prison for two years

Felix is gone and now a guy by the name of Festus – is the Governor. { Marshal Matt Dillions goofy side kick in Gunsmoke

A)When Festus took over from Felix, he was about seventy years of age.

1) History tells us he would rule in this province for two years before dying in office.

B)So Festus is the Governor and he decides to visit the city of Jerusalem –

Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him,<sup>3</sup> asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while *they* lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

So 2 years have gone by – Paul has been out of sight in lock up in Caesarea - but not out of mind -

A)The **root of bitterness** within Paul's enemies seems to have grown deeper and deeper in the soil of their spirits during his two-year absence.

B)First encounter with Festus “Nice to meet you, Festus. Glad you're here,” “Now do us a favor: bring Paul back here to Jerusalem.”

C)But their plan was not for trial. Really Their plan was to ambush and kill Paul.

We see a similarity in this to spiritual warfare.

A)The HATRED of the devil towards us NEVER diminishes.

B)He knows just how influential a Spirit filled believer can be.

1)Always on the attack

<sup>4</sup> But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly. <sup>5</sup> “Therefore,” he said, “let those who have authority among you go down with *me* and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him.” Here the case

<sup>6</sup> And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. <sup>7</sup> When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, **which they could not prove,**

C)So the religious leaders tell all these false accusations about Paul.

1)Riots – insurrection and plague to society etc

<sup>8</sup> while he answered for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.”

<sup>9</sup> But Festus, wanting **to do the Jews a favor,** answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?”

**Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship**

<sup>10</sup> So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. <sup>11</sup> For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.” <sup>12</sup> Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”

**Why did Paul appeal to Caesar?**

A)For one thing, he knew that his ultimate destination was Rome, not Jerusalem;

**B) You shall speak of me in Rome - and the fastest way to get there was to appeal to Caesar.**

**C) Paul also knew that the Jews had not given up their hopes of killing him,**

1) so he was wise to stay under the protection of Rome.

**D) By appealing to Caesar, Paul forced the Romans to guard him and take him to Rome.**

**C) Gov Festus is taken back by this V.12 he asked his counselors –**

1) Can he do that? Can he appeal to Caesar? - Yes

Acts 25:12 "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

**So here's Festus; he's in a real jam.**

**A) According to Roman law, if a Roman citizen appeared to Caesar that meant you had to get him to Rome.**

**B) And if he was sent to Rome, he had to be sent with a written account of the case and of the charges against him.**

1) Everything had to be documented.

**C) He had to show up with a legal case, if you would.**

1) And Festus was in a jam because, as far as he could see, there were no legit charges.

**D) So here's a Roman citizen demanding he be heard by Caesar. And yet there is no case to be heard.**

**See Festus was smart enough to understand that the Jewish case against Paul had nothing to do with civil law.**

**A) It was purely a matter of "religious questions"**

**B) But Paul had appealed to Caesar.**

**C) So Festus thinks – I am going to bring King Agrippa in on this –**

**D) Rome had given Herod Agrippa II legal jurisdiction over the temple in Jerusalem.**

1) And that's where this whole thing started.

**E) Remember, the Jews from Asia Minor, they thought Paul had brought Gentiles into the very temple. And that huge riot broke out.**

**F) And it's just moved forward like a tidal wave from there.**

**And so Festus thinks - Agrippa II has authority over the things concerning the temple.**

**A) So I'm going to ask Agrippa II to help me.**

**Enter AGRIPPA AND BERNICE 13** And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

**Agrippa II was the last of the Herods**

A) The first of the line was Herod the Great, who killed all the babies in Bethlehem when our Lord was born,

**B) His son, Herod Antipas, had John the Baptist beheaded in prison.**

1) His grandson, Herod Agrippa I, put the Apostle James to death with the sword.

**C) Now his great-grandson, Agrippa II, has been appointed by the Romans to be tetrarch of Galilee.**

**With him was Bernice. Described in literature as being a ravishing beauty**

A) She was the **sister of Drusilla**, the wife of the previous Roman governor, Felix, but she was also the sister of her own husband, Agrippa.

**B) They were full brother and sister. And yet, contrary to every law of the Jews, they were living together in an incestuous relationship.**

**C) History tells us Bernice would eventually leave Agrippa for Titus, a Roman general**

1) who would later lead his armies to destroy Jerusalem/ burn the temple.

**Following a short stay in Rome, however, Bernice would go back to Agrippa II.**

A) Bernice was a shady lady and Agrippa was no angel. Thus, many historians say they deserved each other.

B) It is before this morally decadent couple, enslaved by their own lust and passion, that the Apostle Paul is about to appear.

C) So they show up in Caesarea – Read V. 14-22

<sup>14</sup> When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, <sup>15</sup> about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. <sup>16</sup> To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.' <sup>17</sup> Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. <sup>18</sup> When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, <sup>19</sup> but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. <sup>20</sup> And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. <sup>21</sup> But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar."

<sup>22</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself."

"Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

D) So Festus lays out the story and Agrippa says I want to hear him myself.

<sup>23</sup> So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

**GREAT POMP or PAGENTRY**

**GREAT POMP = Phantasia { Fantasy – spectacle**

A) So Festus decided to turn Agrippa II's hearing of Paul into a "red carpet event".

B) So just for a moment try to imagine a "red

carpet event" around like – the Grammys

1) What is she wearing .....

C) The Who's who of Caesarea would be there

Now you would think that Agrippa and Bernice would be the last people – to want limelight especially in Caesarea –

A) Remember how their Dad died there in the very same theater Acts 12:21-23

So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. <sup>22</sup> And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" <sup>23</sup> Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died Acts 12:21-23

B) You would think after that – they would be like – lets go simple ok

C) But the pride in us loves elevation and recognition

1) Full of pomp and pageantry

**So Paul is brought in: What a contrast**

A) Agrippa and Bernice would have entered wearing their purple robes of royalty and the gold crowns

B) Festus would no doubt have put on the scarlet robe which a governor wore on state occasions.

C) Then Paul is brought in - He is dressed in the garb of a prisoner, and he is chained to two guards.

**Paul was unimpressive in his personal appearance.**

A) Historians verify that he was a short man with bowed legs, a long hooked nose, little hair, and runny eyes.

B) Paul was horribly scarred, having been stoned and left for dead, beaten so many times.

Voltaire, the famous French atheist, called Paul - "an ugly little Jew".

### So One SIDE Agrippa – other Paul

A) **One is on a throne, the other is in shackles**

One wears a crown, the other is in chains.

B) Agrippa is a king, but in the slavery of sin.

C) Paul is a chained prisoner, rejoicing in the freedom of sins forgiven and liberty in Christ.

1) Agrippa is an earthly king who could not free Paul nor himself. – **Jail**

### Note v. 23 the word the auditorium

A) Theater there on the beach – but the ESV calls it the audience hall – I like that

B) The Lord is giving Paul an audience with the Festus King Agrippa – Bernice and the who's who of Caesarea – Share the gospel

### C) The Lord gives all of us an Audience hall

1) School – work – neighborhood - soccer field

2) Spouse – children – friends – relatives

D) Sphere of influence – given to you by Jesus

<sup>24</sup> And Festus said: “King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. <sup>25</sup> But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. <sup>26</sup> I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him.

Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. <sup>27</sup> For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”

### So Festus lays out the situation again to the King and to the crowd

A) Festus says to King Agrippa Paul has appealed to Caesar - if I am sending him to Rome I need a reason.

Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.” So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: **ESV made a defense {**

B) We get our word “*apologetic*” from this word. “*Paul stretched out his hand and made his apologetic.*”

C) And Luke makes it a point to record this hand gesture. This is no small thing!

D) I think it tells us something about Paul. Paul is not perplexed at this moment.

1) He's not standing there in shock, thinking - *What am I doing here? These are the powerful people! These are influential people!*

2) **And here I am, I'm this short little guy. And I'm ugly and scarred and beaten. And I'm in chains.**

E) Paul knows who He belongs to – He knows who is on his side – thrilled for the opportunity!

1) He's thrilled for the chance to tell everyone about Jesus!

F) He's thrilled for the chance to tell everyone about how Jesus loved him and how Jesus changed his life!

1) **And so he's getting everybody's attention!**

-2 “I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, 3 especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

### Paul is happy to talk to Agrippa?

A) “because Agrippa understood the Jewish culture, traditions, and religion.”

B) Paul was happy to talk to anyone about Jesus!

C) **As Paul shares with King Agrippa-** He is going to use his **Jewish background to build a platform** for illustrating how RADICAL it is that He is now a follower of Christ!

### Paul appealed to His testimony

A) First he points out that even the Jews present could testify to his **Pharisaic background**: Acts 26:4-5

4 "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. 5 They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

**B)And second, I was waiting for the promise of the Messiah. V. 6-8**

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7 To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

C)And then addressing himself to the whole court he asked this amazing question:V.8 says, "Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"

**Certainly a Jew should not think it incredible,**

A)For one their history was filled with testimony of the power of God – beginning at Creation  
Deliverance from Egypt – Red Sea – manna -

**B)Why should it seem like an amazing thing to you that God could raise the dead?" asked Paul, referring to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

**C)The same question could be asked today. People have trouble with miracles because they fail to comprehend the power and the reality of God.**

**D) You see, the difficulty of a task can only be determined when measured against the agent who attempts to accomplish it.**

E)Is there anything too hard for God?

**Do you think the God who made the vastness of the universe and the intricacies of the atom can raise the dead? -** It all depends on your view of God

**A)Great Argument – Creation?** Why not Resurrection

**B)We can flip that today:** Empty tomb is a great evidence for the reliability of the Bible.

1)Starting point – REZ

**C)Foundation of our Faith**

**1)Jesus Rose – means it is true –**  
If he did not rise – our faith is in vain.

**Paul's third argument is that he demonstrated how sincere he was in his commitment to his beliefs by the way he persecuted the church. V.9-11**

9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; {Gun to the head} and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

**Imagine the impact of that statement on Agrippa and Bernice who came from a long line of Jesus haters**

**A)His grandfather Herod the Great was the one who ordered the murder of baby boys in Bethlehem under the age of two years, hoping to kill Jesus.**

**B)Herod Agrippa I killed James.**

**1)Herodias & Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist.**

**C)That's a long family line of Jesus haters.**

Well, before Paul met Jesus, he was a Jesus hater like nobody else.

**A)And God says I'm going to rescue this Jesus hater;**

**B)and I'm going to stick him in front of a Jesus hater so I can bring the truth of Jesus**

**C)Amazing - God redeems us from our past - but then He redeems even our past –**

**D)and He makes our "lost-ness" something that can show people the grace, the mercy and the love of Jesus!**

**So Paul is sharing his testimony of how he hated Jesus but then he gets to the day it all changed**

<sup>12</sup> “While thus **occupied**, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, <sup>13</sup> at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. <sup>14</sup> And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is hard for you to **kick against the goads.***’ <sup>15</sup> So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup> But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

**Jesus knew Paul – even though Paul didn’t know Jesus**

**Paul essentially says here is what I came to realize – Jesus had a plan for me all along**

**A) He was making me into something!**

**MAKE** = to handle for oneself in advance

**B) APPLICATION:** Christ had been working in Paul’s life up to that very moment to **MAKE** something out of Paul that would **serve His eternal purposes.**

**C) He had been handling Paul in advance to MAKE of this proud and violent man a **MINISTER****

1) **Minister** = “an under-rower” and refers to a lowly servant on a galley ship.

**D) NOTE:** The purpose of the under-rower was to get the people above deck to their destination.

1) What a **PERFECT** example of Paul’s life and ministry. -- He **LIVED** to get people to Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”

**So Paul said Jesus told me this is what my mission in life would be V.17-18**

17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, **18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light,** and from the power of Satan to God, that

they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

**THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL V.18 *OPEN THEIR EYES***

**A) SIN BLINDS: BLINDS US** to the consequences – no idea the bondage it is going to lead to – how destructive it is going to be – Adultery will destroy a family -

**B) Second, sin blinds people to the nature of Jesus.**

1) Original lie – God is holding back on you.

**C) Satan still likes to tell that one – Jesus is a Kill Joy – wants to keep you from having fun.**

1) Nothing could be further from the truth.

John 10:10

“Satan does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

**Paul says this is my mission - to turn men’s lives from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God.**

**Interesting that Hell is described in the Bible as a place of OUTER DARKNESS.**

**A) Ever been in a Cave or a dark place – so dark that you couldn’t see your hand in front of you.**

**B) Erre isn’t it – FEEL THE DARKNESS**

1) That is going to be Hell – so dark – feel the darkness

**C) But also hot – Burning up – screams – weeping and Gnashing of teeth.**

**D) Men who choose to live in darkness on earth will spend eternity surrounded by darkness in hell.**

1) That is Satan’s **END GAME – GOAL**

E) That’s why Paul said, “My ministry, my job, my vision **is to open men’s eyes and to turn men’s lives from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God.**

**that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’**

**Paul says to Agrippa v.19 I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**

**Repentance is changing one's mind.**

**Regeneration** is when God changes one's heart.

**Redemption** is changing one's state—trading the kingdom of darkness and death for the kingdom of light and life.

**“This was my message,” said Paul. V.21**

For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

<sup>22</sup> Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—<sup>23</sup> **that the Christ would suffer**, that He would be the first **to rise from the dead**, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

**Paul Appeals to the Resurrection**

<sup>24</sup> Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” **CRAZY DUDE**

<sup>25</sup> But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. <sup>26</sup> For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

**The life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus was not a secret.**

**A)And Paul makes this very clear. He says, “Agrippa II knows all this stuff.”**

**B)None of this stuff about Jesus was a secret. He is a real person in history. He was watched.**

**C)He was observed. And the record of his life, his death and his resurrection was recorded. He says:**

<sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know

that you do believe.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

**Now Commentators differ on what they think Agrippa II was saying here.**

**A)Some think that Agrippa II was just mocking. It was just jest.**

**B)Others think it was bitter sarcasm born out of anger.**

**1)And others say that it was an expression of sincere conviction, that he was saying, “Man, you have almost persuaded me!”**

**C)Paul's response in the next verse moves me to believe that Agrippa's heart really was touched**

**1)because there in the next verse Paul pleads with him to trust Christ!**

**D)And by the way, why would Paul keep going at this moment?**

**1)One guy just called him a lunatic, then totally discounted.**

**E)Paul kept going because Paul knew that Jesus kept chasing him.**

**All that time that Paul was persecuting Christians, Jesus kept chasing Paul.**

**A)And now Paul stands before Agrippa II.**

**B)And even though he's just been called a lunatic by Festus, Paul is not going to quit.**

<sup>29</sup> And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”

<sup>30</sup> When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; <sup>31</sup> and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.”

<sup>32</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

**Wow! They didn't walk away saying, "What in the world was that?"**

A) He's talking about Jesus, about what Jesus did to him, and how he used to kill Christians.

B) Now he wants to see people become Christians. And he's willing to die as a Christian.

1) What in the world was that?" No!

C) Pt – In reality Paul wasn't on trial they were!

1) Same true today

**Agrippa II enjoyed unlimited freedom and power, but his heart was chained in darkness.**

A) And in the end, the prisoner was actually the free man; and the king was really the slave.

B) Felix walks off the pages of Scripture without a commitment to follow Christ.

C) Agrippa II walks off the pages of Scripture with the nickname - "Almost!"

1) Agrippa II was almost convinced.

D) Almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades

**Agrippa had the opportunity to make it safely into eternity.**

A) But he grabbed the wrong bag. He grabbed Bernice. - Not the time to grab your wife hand

**B) You see, every time Agrippa is mentioned (25:13; 25:23; 26:30), he's always with Bernice.**

**C) She had a hold on him.- Does sin have a hold of you today?**

An eagle swooped down and grabbed a rodent in its powerful talons. Pulling it to its chest, he soared higher and higher.

Suddenly, however, **he no longer looked majestic**, but began to flap his wings rapidly before losing altitude and crashing into a rock.

Upon investigation, the naturalist observing the scene discovered that the little rodent had its teeth imbedded in the chest of the mighty eagle.

Although the eagle thought he was controlling the rodent, all the while the rodent was actually draining the life from him.

**People think, I'm controlling him, or her, or it, as they tighten their grip on sin!**

A) But in reality, the thing they cling to is the very thing that will drain the life from them.

B) Sin does that to you and me. It's a rat.

1) It'll drain you and keep you from being what God knows you could be.

C) Jesus wants to set up free!

**BUT Do you know that you can almost be a Christian and then be lost for time and eternity?**

How tragic that is!

"Almost" will not do.

**It must be all or nothing. Either you accept Christ or you don't accept Christ.**

Either you have Christ or you don't have Christ.

Either you trust Christ or you don't trust Christ.

Either He is your Savior or He is not your Savior.

It is one of the two.

There is no such thing as a middle ground. It cannot be almost. It must be all.