

# (Acts) Almost a Christian

by Brian Brodersen

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*Paul shares his testimony and explains his hope in the resurrection of Jesus to King Agrippa, despite being accused of heresy and other crimes.*

**Duration:** 1:00:22

**Scripture:** Acts 9:5-6, Acts 26:18-20, Acts 26:22-23, Acts 26:28

**Topics:** "Spiritual Blindness", "Following Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses Paul's commission to the Gentiles as outlined in verse 18. The first aspect of this commission is to open their eyes, as the natural condition of man is one of spiritual blindness. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing this spiritual blindness in others and the need for them to see the truth of the gospel. The sermon also encourages believers to serve the Lord by simply asking Him what He would have them do and trusting in His power to enable them to fulfill their calling. The speaker concludes by highlighting the patience and love of God in persistently reaching out to humanity and urging listeners to fully commit to following Christ.

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## Transcript

Good evening, let's turn to the 25th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. So we pick up in the 25th chapter, and as we pick up the story, Paul has been in prison in Caesarea. He's been there under the authority of the governor, Felix, and Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus.

And so chapter 25 begins with the administration of Festus as it relates to Paul there in prison. So now when Festus had come to the province after three days, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself was going there shortly. 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. Now, I don't know if you remember back when we were studying the previous chapters, but as we looked at Felix, the previous governor of the area, he was a very corrupt man.

He was your typical corrupt politician. He was basically in a position of power to gratify himself, and he was filled with lust and greed and every imaginable kind of vice. But Festus is a considerably different

man.

He is probably in many ways the antithesis of Felix. He's an upright man. He was a good ruler.

His reign in Judea was very brief. He actually died two years into his reign here as the governor of the land. But he was a fair man, a just man, and he was a true Roman.

He wanted to make sure that things were right. And so as these guys are still seeking to get their hands on Paul and they come to him and seek to, you know, sort of butter him up and and get their way, he says, nope, that's not going to happen. If you want to come to Caesarea, then you're free to do that.

But he wasn't going to jump into the political game with them. He wanted to make sure that justice was truly carried out. And so as we pick up, then the story.

When he had remained among them more than 10 days, he went down to Caesarea and the next day sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. And 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 while he answered for himself. Now, Paul is speaking neither against the law of the Jews nor against the temple nor against Caesar.

Have I offended in anything at all? 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? Now, remember, this is early in the administration, and so he's only been there a few weeks. And as a politician, he's wanting to get on the good side of the people that he's ruling over and the people that he's going to have to be working with to some extent. So he's thinking he'll ingratiate himself to the Jews by suggesting that Paul go up to Jerusalem to be tried there, because that's, of course, what they were really wanting.

Now, I don't think that he had any idea that they had plans to do away with Paul on the way. But Paul, of course, knew their plotting and this had been going on for a long, long time. And so as Festus asked him if he would consent to going up to Jerusalem to be tried there, Paul said in verse 10, 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, for if I am an offender or 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.

Now, Paul did something that I don't think Festus had anticipated. Instead of consenting to go to Jerusalem because he knew that he'd never make it there alive, he exercised his prerogative as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. If a Roman citizen in good standing.

In good standing, in a sense, there were there were if a person was a murderer or if a person was a pirate or a traitor or something like that, then there was no appeal process. But for the average person who was going through the judicial system, if they felt that they were not getting a fair treatment, they had the right of appeal to the highest court in the land. They could appeal directly to Caesar himself.

And that's what Paul did on this occasion. As a Roman citizen, he exercises that right. And he says, I'll basically, you know, I'll take my chances with Caesar rather than go stand before the Jews, because he knew that they had one thing in mind, and that was to try to frame him and basically to kill him ultimately.

Now, it would have been Nero that Paul was appealing to. And historically, we know that Nero became a very monstrous person. And under him, the empire suffered tremendously.

And under him, the Christians suffered exceedingly. But in the early stages of the reign of Nero, he wasn't a bad guy. Actually, in the first five years of his reign, he had good advisors and older people around him that, you know, it lent itself to a fairly good administration.

And so it would probably be in that period of time that Paul would make the appeal. And so he is going to go and he's going to stand before Caesar. And so Festus, after he hears this, he conferred with the council and he answered, you have appealed to Caesar, then to Caesar, you shall go.

And after some days, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. And 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, about whom the chief priest and the elders of the Jews informed me when I was in Jerusalem asking for a judgment against him. 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.

Therefore, when they had come together without any delay the next day or without any delay the next day, I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. When the accuser stood up, they brought no accusations against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I wasn't certain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters.

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. Then Agrippa said to Festus, I also would like to hear this man myself tomorrow. He said, you shall hear him.

And so Festus is explaining all of this to Agrippa. Now, this man, Agrippa, King Agrippa, he is part of the family of Herod. And if you remember that family has really a long history of opposition to the gospel, it was his great grandfather, the one that was known as Herod, the great who attempted to kill Jesus in his infancy.

You remember the story there in when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and word came back to Herod that the Messiah had been born. And you remember the wise men were traveling from the east and they actually came to Herod and said, where is the one who was born the king of the Jews and Herod, who was an extremely paranoid individual, he sought to find out exactly where the child was. And then when he heard it was the region of Bethlehem, perhaps you remember the story.

He sent the soldiers in and they slaughtered all the children two years old and younger. It was his grandfather, Herod Agrippa's grandfather, who then executed John the Baptist. He was the one who had John the Baptist beheaded.

It was his father who had murdered James, the apostle. And so now Paul is about to come before this man, Herod Agrippa, but he was considerably different than these men in a couple of areas. Number one, he did not have any of the power that the previous rulers had at this time.

Herod Agrippa II, he was given just a small area to rule just north of the land of Israel in what would be known today as Lebanon. He had a small kingdom there. But interestingly, Rome had given him authority over the temple in Jerusalem and he was the one who was responsible to appoint the high priest.

So he didn't have a whole lot of political power. And as he as he's going to listen to Paul and as Paul is going to present his case before Agrippa, Agrippa doesn't really even have any power to make a decision regarding Paul Festus has much more power than Agrippa does. But Agrippa is much more familiar with these things than Festus is, so he's looking for some help.

That's basically what's going on here. And so. The next day, verse 23, 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's command, Paul was brought in.

Now, one quick word on Bernice. Bernice was the sister of Agrippa. The second.

She was also the sister of Drusilla and Drusilla, maybe you remember, she was the wife of Felix, the previous governor. So this is one of those, you know, weird, intriguing kind of things, you know, that happened with these various dynasties and everybody intermarrying and all of that to gain power. But Bernice and Agrippa, the second, although they were brother and sister, historically, it's believed that they were also in love with each other and therefore involved in an incestuous relationship with one another.

So verse 24. Festus is speaking and he 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. 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. 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 might I may have something to write for.

It seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him. So this is where you see that Festus, he was a good man in many ways, but yet he also, you know, as a politician, he's trying to work both sides of it. There really isn't a case.

That's what he's saying. Instead of just acknowledging that and saying this man needs to just be liberated, he's trying to figure out, well, what can I send to the emperor? You've got to be able to designate what the charges are, but I can't really pinpoint anything that he's done at this point. So so at this point, really, Paul should have been and could have been dismissed.

But his appeal to Caesar sort of put him in a bit of a bind, because once he appealed to Caesar. An official sort of. You know, overthrowing that appeal could look to be exercising an authority against Caesar, and therefore, you know, they didn't really want to do anything like that, lest they jeopardize their own life or, you know, their own position, at least.

So Agrippa said to Paul, as they're all gathered here in Caesarea. If you go to Israel today. The theater where all of this transpired is still there today.

Of course, it was excavated and, you know, the whole thing's been uncovered, but it's still very much of it is intact. And this is more than likely where they would have held this somewhat of a trial. And so Agrippa

is sort of presiding over the whole thing and he says to Paul, you're permitted for yourself to speak.

You're permitted to speak for yourself. So Paul stretched out his hand and he answered for himself. 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.

So Paul's excited about this opportunity. And for a couple of reasons, I think he's excited about the opportunity because he's going to have another opportunity to share the gospel with a person of power within the kingdom. He had done that with Festus.

He had done it with Felix. And now he's excited about another opportunity to share the gospel with Felix. But the second reason why he's excited is.

Told to us in verse three, 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. So Agrippa was very familiar with all of the matters that Paul was going to discuss with him.

Now, the one thing I want to just remind you of is that the the family of Herod, the Herodian dynasty. It was a mixture of Idumean, which were the ancient Edomites who were descendants of Esau, you remember Esau, the brother of Jacob. They they were his descendants, but through all of this intermarriage, they had intermarried into the Jewish family as well.

And so Agrippa was actually Jewish to some extent. And as I already mentioned, Rome had given him authority over the temple and over the appointment of the high priest. So he would have definitely been a person who was very well versed in the Jewish faith and the things that concerned it at the time.

So, Paul, he says, I'm I'm happy to be able to speak to you today, Agrippa, because you're going to know what I'm talking about. And so, Paul, now he just simply asked him to hear me patiently. And so, Paul, once again, as he's done already a few different times in the course of, you know, these different trials, hearing type of things that he's going through, he's going to once again share his own experience.

He's going to share his testimony. So he says, my manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know 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. So Paul is is sort of indicating that there was an unwillingness on the part of those to even acknowledge his past.

He said they could testify if they were willing. They know the way I used to be. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers, to this promise, our 12 tribes earnestly serving God night and day hope to attain for this hope sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

So Paul lays it out in no uncertain terms. You see, they were accusing Paul of three things. They were accusing him of heresy.

They were accusing him of sacrilege. They said he defiled the temple and they were thirdly accusing him of sedition against Caesar. Those were the accusations that they continue to bring up now.

They had a legitimate argument in one sense on the first point, because they really did believe what Paul was saying was heretical. But the other two things were completely fabricated, so they had no qualms whatsoever about lying to try to attain their desired result. Paul did not defile the temple, and he had never

on any occasion done anything against Caesar or against the Roman government.

And so, Paul, immediately he gets to the point. He says, I am in trouble, not for sedition, not for sacrilege. I'm in trouble because I'm holding on to the hope of Israel.

I'm holding on to the promises that God gave to the fathers. And then he says, why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? Now, it's an interesting thing, because the Pharisees themselves believed in a resurrection from the dead. And this was something that was a fairly common belief among the Jews.

Now, the ones that wouldn't have believed in a resurrection were the Sadducees, because the Sadducees were they were the materialists. They were they were really completely liberal in their theological approach. They did not believe in an afterlife.

They basically believed that everything had to do with the here and now. And so they a minority group, you know, surrounding the family of the priesthood, for the most part, they would have been the ones that would have balked at the idea of a resurrection. But the Pharisees and the vast majority of the people who were influenced greatly by the Pharisees, they would have themselves believed.

In a resurrection, at least theoretically, they would have believed it, but evidently, as it's actually occurred now, historically, they're struggling with it. You know, they they believed it theoretically before it ever happened. But now that it's happened.

Wait a second. Well, we you know, we might have believed that before. But, you know, they just at this point, they were not embracing the idea of a resurrection, especially the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

So Paul goes on and he says, Indeed, I myself thought that I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem and many of the saints. I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priest.

And when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Now. Notice in when they were put to death, we know that Paul was there at the death of Stephen, we read it back in the account there, but Paul seems to be indicating that he was involved on more than one occasion in that sort of thing, because he uses the term they instead of, you know, just speaking of one individual.

So Paul was on a rampage. And he was seeking the death sentence for those who were believing that Jesus was the Messiah. And he says here that he cast his vote against them.

Now, because of this statement here, people have speculated that Paul was. Perhaps a member of the Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin was the the 70 member ruling council of Israel, it was sort of like the Senate. They were the ones who made all of the decisions for the nation politically and civically and religiously, of course, because everything was tied to the religion.

But because he says, I cast my vote, many have speculated that that Paul might have been part of the Sanhedrin. And that is a possibility. But I think the best we can do is just speculate about it, because we're never told specifically that that was the case.

It could be that he's just simply saying that I was right there. I was agreeing with the condemnation that was being passed on these people. But again, it might have been a literal vote there in the Sanhedrin.

And so he says, and I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme and being exceedingly enraged against them. I persecuted them even to foreign cities. Now, back in the the end of the eighth chapter, the early part of the ninth chapter, we Luke just briefly touches on the fact that, you know, Saul was still breathing out threatenings and murders against the disciples of the Lord, but he doesn't really give us any detail about the activity of Saul.

But here, Saul, here, Paul, you know, in some ways, he sort of fills in the blanks a little bit. And he tells us, again, not in any great detail, but generally tells us what he was involved in. He was going into every synagogue.

So this wasn't something that he just occasionally did. But this was his occupation. This was the thing that was consuming him.

He went to every synagogue in the land, evidently. And then after he had gone to every synagogue in the land, he says that he even persecuted them in foreign cities. So he was out to wipe out this heretical sect.

He was out to just completely obliterate this new thing called Christianity. That was the mission that he was on. And so he says, while thus occupied.

Occupied with persecuting them, going to the foreign cities, while thus occupied as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priest at midday. Oh, King, along the road, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun shining around me and those who journeyed with me. 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.

So he said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 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 the things which I will reveal to you, I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you to open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light, 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.

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 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. For these reasons, the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. So that's the the truth of the matter, says the reason why I'm standing before you today, the reason why these guys are trying to kill me is because I'm preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, what Paul was doing, he was telling Gentiles that they could be saved just like the Jews were saved, that they didn't need to convert to Judaism, that they could go directly into a relationship with God through Jesus, the Messiah, and this incensed the Jews, the thought that a Gentile could have a standing before God identical to theirs was just absolutely out of the question in their thinking process.

There's just no way they had for so many years they had been, you know, basically brainwashed into thinking that as God's people, they had an exclusive right to God and the Gentiles were only in existence to be used in the future to flame the fires of hell. And so here Paul is going to the Gentiles saying you can come straight to God through the Messiah, you don't even have to go through the the avenue of Judaism, and this is what caused them to hate Paul with such hatred and want to do away with him. Remember,

when he was there on the steps of the Antonia Fortress back in the twenty second chapter and he's giving is a similar message, he's speaking of the whole crowd, he's giving sort of his defense and everybody's listening intently to what he's saying until he says this one thing, Gentiles and the moment he says Gentiles, they went ballistic and they began to rip their clothes and throw dirt in the air.

And they they were saying, this man, he's now he should be killed. He's not fit to live on the earth. And so Paul is saying to Agrippa, that's really the problem here.

The issue is that I'm preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and that's why they want to kill me. I'm not a heretic. I haven't desecrated the temple and I'm not opposing Caesar.

I'm preaching the gospel and that's why I'm in the position I'm in. Therefore, having obtained help from God to this day, I stand witnessing both the small and great say no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come 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. So Paul sort of, you know, brings everything to a conclusion by saying, you know, I'm the message I have is the message of Moses and the prophets.

They talked about the Messiah and that's what I'm proclaiming as well. Now, as he thus made his defense, Festus. He says with a loud voice, Paul.

You're insane. That's what he says, Paul, you're beside yourself, much learning has driven you to insanity. Now, here's Festus, he's the Roman.

He's committed, obviously, to the Roman Empire. He's a logical man. He knows nothing about these things.

He's you know, that's why he's got Paul talking to Agrippa, because he just doesn't know how to make heads or tails of this thing, because he is completely unfamiliar with these matters. And in the course of this, he just says, oh, Paul, you just you know, you've been studying too long and too hard. You've just lost your mind.

But listen to Paul's response. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason for the king before whom I also speak freely knows these things, for I am convinced that none of these things escape his attention since this thing was not done in a corner. It's interesting how Paul, what he's really doing, as you can see, and as we'll see more clearly in a moment, he is really making a gospel appeal to Agrippa.

He's not simply just standing there trying to get himself off the hook. He is really seeking to influence this king for Christ. And so as Festus sort of, you know, not knowing anything about this and interrupting to say, no, Paul, you know, you've lost your mind, says, no, I haven't lost my mind.

And the king, he knows these things. And I think it's interesting the way Paul, you know, he just sort of brings it right back to Agrippa. He sort of puts in a sense gently and respectfully.

He puts the pressure back on him. The king knows these things. And now, verse 27, King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe amazing.

I mean, here's Paul, he's he's the prisoner, he's the guy standing there in the you know, everybody's decked out in their finest and their royal garments and Paul's there in his shabby clothing and he's chained. But as you read the story, you see that Paul really has command of the whole situation. And as he lays all of this out to Agrippa, I think it's fascinating the way he doesn't simply just share his testimony and say, OK, see, I'm not guilty now.

Can you pull some strings and get me off the hook? I mean, he actually puts himself deeper into it by doing what he does here because he gets personal with the king and he says, King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? So Paul is not interested in in telling the story simply to defend himself. He's seizing the opportunity. Jesus had told him in the beginning that he was going to be his witness and that he was going to stand before governors and kings.

And that's what's been happening. And so Paul is going to take total advantage of this opportunity here. And he says, do you believe the prophets? And then he says, I know that you believe.

And then Agrippa said to Paul, you almost persuade me to become a Christian. Now, this is an interesting translation because. The word here that's translated almost is is actually could be maybe better translated.

By by the word little. And and therefore, it's caused a bit of a problem in translating what Agrippa's response actually was. And so some think his response was just as it's written here.

That's why it's written this way. Some think that Agrippa saying, Paul, that is such a powerful presentation. I'm just about to become a Christian myself.

Others think that what Agrippa is saying is. Paul, do you think in such a little amount of time you could actually persuade me to become a Christian? So, you know, from one perspective, it seems like Agrippa is responding in a positive manner. And the other, it seems almost like he's sort of just dismissing the whole thing.

And and which it actually is, is is really hard to say. I personally prefer to think that this is the response here. You almost persuade me to become a Christian.

But the sad thing, either way you look at it, is the almost. Is not enough. To almost be a Christian.

Will actually. Work against you on the judgment day. More so than if you never.

Had the opportunity at all. So Agrippa, by almost becoming a Christian, perhaps. He actually is setting himself up for greater judgment in the future, sadly.

Because he doesn't respond the way that he should have responded. But Paul said, I would to God. That not only you, but also all that hear me today might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.

Now. Let's just finish up the chapter, then a few things I want to touch on that we've already read through. When he had said these things, the king stood up as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them, and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, this man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.

Then Agrippa said to Festus, this man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. So, again, you see, the appeal to Caesar sort of I mean, it really did seal it for Paul now. Because that was the

case, because evidently they would have released him at this time had he not appealed to Caesar, people have thought Paul made a big mistake by falling back on his Roman citizenship, not trusting in God.

Paul made a mistake. And and, you know, look what's happened. He could have been set free, but now he's not going to be.

But yet. That's not necessarily the case. Had Paul not appealed to Caesar, he might never have had this opportunity to stand before Agrippa, because had he not appealed to Caesar, he was going to go to Jerusalem.

And we know that they were waiting in ambush to kill him. So, you know, sometimes people will look at this and say, oh, well, here's an example of Paul. You know, he he was, you know, many times himself struggling and he he wasn't trusting God.

And here's a prime example of him not trusting God. He's he's leaning to his own understanding or he's acting in the flesh by, you know, depending on his status as a Roman citizen to take care of himself. I personally think that Paul made the right decision.

The Lord had told Paul that he was going to go to Rome and this would send him to Rome probably wasn't the way that he anticipated that he might go. But this certainly was going to send him to Rome. The appeal to Caesar is what eventually would get him there.

God uses sometimes he uses our natural natural circumstances and he sometimes does things in a completely different way than we would think that he would do it. And. Just because it's different than what we thought, it doesn't mean that, you know, it wasn't the right way.

Doesn't mean that at all, necessarily, but be that as it may, let's just back up and look at a few things here. I want to look at the commission of Paul, and that's really what he concentrates on here. He doesn't even so much, you know, concentrate on his his conversion as he does on his commission.

So and that's part of his argument, he's saying, I'm obeying God, these guys are upset because I'm doing what God told me to do. But as Paul lays out his commission here, I think there's something real significant for us to lay hold of as well. In verse 18, he tells us five things that he was commissioned to do.

He was sent to the Gentiles to, number one, open their eyes. To open their eyes. The condition of man naturally is a condition of spiritual blindness.

And we see it all around us, don't we? I mean, you see people that, you know, maybe even in in some ways you look at a person, you think, wow, they're they're a great person. I really like that guy or I really like that girl or, you know, I enjoy a friendship with them or, you know, something about him is really attractive and you like them. And but yet when it comes to spiritual things, there is a blindness there.

It's just unbelievable how they they can't see spiritually, they have no capacity to to see things as they really are and they they see no need for a savior. They say see no need for the gospel message. Everything is fine.

And, you know, we maybe we know people like that. I know people like that. And it's it's a heartbreaking thing.

It's a frustrating thing. You just think, oh, Lord, what's the matter? Well, what's the matter is that they're blind. Their eyes spiritually are shut.

As Paul would write to the Corinthians and remind them, the God of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. And isn't it true that we see that all around us today, blindness? Sometimes I just I get overwhelmed with that as I'm just out doing, you know, whatever out in in our world that we live in and you just see people just going along as though nothing. Was ever going to happen as though there's nothing to be concerned about or afraid of or anything like that, they're just completely oblivious to spiritual matters.

No interest whatsoever, but Jesus sent Paul to open their eyes. And we, I think, have that same commissioning, but how do we do it? How do we get through to people like that? How can we see their eyes opened and how can we see them? Come out of this blind condition. Well, I think first and foremost, this is where prayer is really a key ingredient.

Praying for them, praying that God will move and that those blinders that Satan has put upon them, that God would somehow supernaturally intervene and and touch them. That's why prayer is so vital, as we mentioned in the study last week, just that that need to pray. So that we can see.

People have sight spiritually, and then he said, in order to turn them from darkness to light. All people are in darkness, just steeped in it, lost in it. But.

Jesus said to Paul, I'm sending you to turn them from from darkness to light, and that is an excellent description of going from being an unbeliever to a believer, isn't it? For those of us that have that have made that transition in our adult years and knowing the distinction, oh, I remember the darkness so well, I was in it. It was in me. It was all over the place.

And, oh, it was miserable. And and then to come to Christ and to have the lights come on and to be in the light and to see things clearly and to just have that sense of everything's right. That's what God wants to do for people.

He wants to deliver them from darkness. He wants to take them out of the darkness and put them in the light and then deliver them from the power of Satan to the power of God. The reality is people outside of Christ are under the dominion of Satan.

That's the truth of the matter. You know, we live in a world that rejects to to a large degree the spiritual concept of life and, you know, any mention of something other than just the material world, people, many people will scoff at that. But there is a spiritual world just as surely as there is a material world.

And actually, the spiritual world is more real than the material world, because the material world is temporary. The spiritual world is permanent. So if there was an illusion, it's it's us.

We're in the illusion. You know, as as men will pridefully scoff at the idea of the spiritual, I would imagine those in the spiritual realm are scoffing at those scoffers in the material realm. But the reality is there is a spiritual realm and Satan.

Is chief in that realm and he holds people in captivity. He really, as we've already mentioned, he blinds them. He is the prince of darkness.

They're part of his kingdom. But the great thing is the gospel delivers people from all of this, delivers people from the power of Satan and puts them under the power of God. Well, living life under the reign of Christ, what a wonderful thing.

And living under the tyranny of Satan, oh, it's brutal, it's miserable. We get a good picture of it back with the Israelites in Egypt. You remember they were there in slavery and their taskmasters were brutalizing them and they were there for one thing only, and that was to build bigger cities for Pharaoh.

And that's a picture really of. Of life in general. That's what people are doing here in this world, they're just they're serving Satan, they're under his tyranny, he's the taskmaster, and all of their efforts are really just to, you know, further his agenda.

And it's a rigorous life, it's a life filled with bitterness and hard bondage. But when we come to Christ, we're set free from that tyranny and we're brought into this glorious liberty. Under the son of God.

And we know that and we wait for that to happen, not just on an individual level from Christian to Christian, but we wait for it to happen on a worldwide level and it will. And then he said, and that they may receive forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins, that's the big issue, sin, sin is the thing that's spoiling life, sin is the thing that's ruining something that could be really good, something that could be really beautiful, you know, when you think about life as good as it gets and just life in general.

You know, you find that even those who are living the so-called good life in moments of real honesty, they will admit that there's something that's still wrong, there's something that's not quite right, there's there's something that's just spoiling things. It's sin. And that's just the way life is the best life can be in this world.

And even for those who are, you know, debt free, those who have perfect health, those who have good relationships with other people, those who might be living the ideal human experience. If you probe enough, if you sit and listen, you converse, you'll find that there's still something there that's not right. There's still something that's, you know, that that's just the way life is because it's sin.

You know, I was I took my younger son, Braden, down to the beach to surf today and I paddled out in the water myself and it was a beautiful day, absolutely gorgeous day. And, you know, the sky was blue and the sun was out and the sea was calm and there was a good swell and all this stuff. And so, you know, paddling out and I see this other guy out there.

Hi, how you doing? How you doing? And I said to him, I said, man, isn't it a great day? And he said, yeah, great day, except for this red tide. And I thought, you know, that's the way it is, you know, if it wasn't the red tide, it'd be something else, you know, great day except for. And it just got me thinking, you know, as I was paddling along, just got me thinking, yeah, that's you know, you with everything you can probably in this great.

Yeah. But, you know, there's that one thing that's that's the way life is. It's because of sin.

It's because sin entered into the world and sin wrecked what God intended. But the glorious gospel tells us that we've got forgiveness of sin. And because of forgiveness of sin, we're back in a right relationship with God and we have the ultimate promise that sin is going to be gone forever, not only from our own lives, but it's going to be gone from this planet.

It's going to be gone from God's creation entirely. And we wait for that anxiously. But then finally, the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

So that's what's happened. To those that have come to Christ, their eyes have been opened, they've been turned from darkness to light, they've been brought out from under the power of Satan and brought under the power of God, they've had their sins forgiven and they've been given an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? And how does that all happen? It all happens simply by asking for it.

God has made it so simple that anybody who would desire to be saved can be saved. All they have to do is say, Lord, I want that. I want to see I want to come out from under that oppression.

I want to be under your authority and power. I want my sins forgiven. I want to be part of that kingdom.

As we simply ask him. He grants his grants it to us. And so this was Paul's commissioning, and this is a picture of what God wants to do through us as well.

Some of us, maybe he wants to do it on a similar level to the way he did it through Paul. For others on a smaller scale, for others, it might be just, you know, people around us. But God wants us.

To be his instruments so he can touch people. I was talking to a lady the other day and she was telling me how much she really wanted to serve the Lord. Actually, it was after last Saturday, next message, and she was moved and said she really wanted to serve or she had three little boys there and she was basically telling me I want to serve the Lord, but I've got these kids and I got this and that, you know, and I just looked and said, you know what? There it is right there.

There's your service to God. Those three boys, you instill the life of God in those kids and you've you've done a wonderful thing. So, you know, we've been talking a bit about serving the Lord and and here's as I said, here's another picture of what service to God looks like.

But sometimes when we think about it, we get overwhelmed like, oh, no, but how can I do that? And we don't have to feel that way. All we have to do is like Paul, just simply say, you know, what would you have me to do, Lord? And whatever God would have us to do, he will put us in the position to do it. He'll give us the power to do it.

And that it's as simple as that in many ways. You know, sometimes we can get under this burden that, well, I've got to do this great thing for God. And yet we need to remember that.

We just need to do what God calls us to do, and we will do that if we are just seeking him and available to him and just saying, Lord, what would you have me to do? I want to be your instrument. I want to be used to open people's eyes and to see him turn from darkness to light and the power of Satan to God and have their sins forgiven and be given inheritance. Lord, use me to do that.

And when we sincerely say that, here's the great news. God will take us up on it and he'll make it happen. And we don't have to go around with this big weight feeling like we've got to convert the whole world ourselves, but know that the Lord is just going to he's going to bring it along as we trust in him.

So beautiful picture of ministry now in closing real quickly, going back for a moment to King Agrippa, you almost persuaded me to become a Christian. As I said, I think that that's what he's saying, I don't think

he's saying you think in such a short time I'm going to respond to that message, Paul, because Paul says, I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today might become both almost altogether, such as I am. I think Agrippa responded, I'm close, but.

The question that we've got to ask is what stopped him? Why, I mean, after Paul presents this and he knows the scriptures and he knows the prophets and Paul says, I know you believe these things, why Agrippa, why don't you make that commitment? Why don't you make that decision? Why don't you embrace Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah? And I think there are basically three reasons why Agrippa did not do that. Two of them were sitting right next to him. One of them was Bernice, because to follow Christ meant that his relationship with her was going to have to change and that this incestuous, sexually perverted thing that they had going was not going to continue to happen.

And no doubt it was that influence that she had over him in that area of lust in his life that would have played a role in his decision. But Festus also. Festus was the man's man, Festus said, Paul, you're crazy, you're out of your mind, you're nuts.

Agrippa might have thought, oh, no, if I agree with Paul, Festus is going to tell me I'm nuts, too. I don't want anybody to tell me I'm crazy. You know, the power.

It's unbelievable, the power of ridicule, it's unbelievable how we can cower at the thought of somebody criticizing us for our faith, you know, and it's such a bizarre thing. I mean, you might find you might find a number of men that would be fearless in the face of unbelievable danger, you know, rushing into battle without any second thought about losing their lives. But they're fearless because the call of duty.

I mean, you might find somebody that, you know, would take on a wild beast or something like that, fearless, but that same person. The thought of being mocked or ridiculed. For being a follower of Jesus, oh, that's too much, I can't handle that.

It's amazing the power of ridicule, and I think that that was another factor that Agrippa was he was afraid he was afraid of losing the relationship with Bernice and losing that fulfillment of his own lust. He was afraid of what Festus might think of him. And he wouldn't be quite the Roman if he followed after this.

But I think also. It was about his position. He knew that if he were to make that decision, it could jeopardize his position in life, and that probably.

Was the main factor, but remember what Jesus said, what would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? Poor Agrippa II, he had just a little portion of what his ancestors had as a kingdom. He was a little insignificant player in the bigger picture that he held on to those little, tiny, insignificant things. And he lost his soul.

Because he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but almost isn't good enough, and that's sad, but those are the things. Still today, that so often can be a factor. You're in a relationship, maybe, and it's not right, but you know that following Christ means giving it up and you want to hold on to that, what would it profit? To gain your to lose your soul over that.

Or you're afraid of what others might think of you, what would it profit to lose your soul over that, or maybe you've got a position or you're looking for a position and you know that this following Christ wouldn't be conducive to that, but to lose your soul over that. And that's really the tragedy of this story is that Agrippa, there's nothing in history to ever indicate that he did anything further to respond to Christ. But he was this

close, he was right there face to face with the great Apostle Paul, face to face with the testimony of the prophets and history and the reality of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, this thing wasn't done in a corner, everybody knows it happened.

What do you say about it, Agrippa? But he never made it. How sad. It's a story of many people, but may it not be the story of any here.

Don't almost be persuaded. Take that step. You might be an inch away.

Just take that step. You'll never regret it. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for your love for us, your patience with us. Lord, it's amazing when we think of you and who you are and how, Lord, you just patiently endure the stubbornness of man. Lord, you patiently endure when people continually refuse to yield to you, Lord, you could you could obliterate us in a millisecond, but instead of doing that, you just keep on working, you keep on tugging, you keep on sending people along to remind us of the truth.

Lord, you're so good. Your long suffering is amazing. Lord, I pray that anyone tonight hearing this message and being almost a Christian, I pray that that would change and that they would come and yield themselves to you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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