

Paul Speaks Before Agrippa

by Robin McKeown

In his address to King Agrippa, Paul articulates the profound hope found in the gospel and the necessity of personal faith in Christ for true happiness and salvation.

Duration: 26:45

Scripture: Acts 25:23, Acts 26:17-18, Acts 26:23, Acts 26:27-29

Topics: "Agrippa"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having one's eyes opened to the truth of the gospel. He quotes a poem by William Blaine that highlights the consequences of not turning to God and dwelling in hell. The preacher then focuses on the provision of the gospel, which is forgiveness of sins, and highlights the joy and happiness that comes from knowing one's sins are forgiven. He also emphasizes the personal nature of the gospel message, directing his words specifically to a gripper and emphasizing the need for individuals to take the message personally. The preacher concludes by discussing the happiness that comes from obeying the Savior and having a relationship with Him.

Transcript

Acts 25 and 23. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at festest commandment Paul was brought forth. Now chapter 26 and verse 1. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.

Then Paul stretched forth the hand and answered for himself. I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews, especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews. Wherefore, I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

My manner of life from my youth, or from my youth up, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, knew all the Jews, which know me from the beginning. If they would testify that after the most straightest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee, and now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, unto which promise are twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now further down please, verse 12. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And I said, who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, but rise and stand upon my feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. Now further down for the sake of time please, verse 23, that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.

Now further down please, verse 27, King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds.

Now that's our reading. May God bless the further reading from the Holy Scriptures with what we have listened to tonight. I want to mention to begin with just rather briefly, for I don't want to spend too much time on it.

I want you to think first of all of the poem. This was a very auspicious occasion because we read in verse 23 of chapter 25 that on this particular day when King Agrippa was come and Bernice with great pomp and the chief captains were all there and the principal men of the city, it was an occasion of great pomp. That word pomp simply means show, display, great ostentation.

Paul was absolutely unimpressed. And I want to say something to you about great pomp. You see, there's a hymn that says, when all the pomp and glory here like mourning Jews shall disappear.

These individuals mentioned in verse 23 are already in eternity. Their pomp is gone. It was one of your own countrymen, Thomas Gray, whose elegy written in a country churchyard.

I used to be able to quote all of that poem with its many verses. In one verse, here's what Gray wrote in his elegy. The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, and all that beauty, all that wealth there gave awaits alike the inevitable hour, the paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Could we say to you tonight in this tent, there is only one thing in this world worth having, and it's God's salvation. We can do without the pomp. We can do without the glory.

I thought about this today, so I'm not going to make this statement idly now. I would rather live in a hovel and be saved than live in a mansion without Christ. Are you saved tonight? We'll leave that behind for we haven't time.

I want to move from the pomp to the preacher. I want to think about this preacher. The first thing I want you to notice from a preacher is his own lips.

We get it in chapter 26 in verse 2. I think myself happy, King Agrippa. Here's a man who's happy. He hasn't got the pomp.

He's got the prison chains. For over two years, he's languished in prison at Caesarea, unlawfully, unjustly in prison. But I want to tell you, he's happier than King Agrippa and his sister Bernice and the chief captains and the principal men of the city.

He's happier than all of them put together. Do you know why? Because he's saved. Because he's saved.

You know, the Bible tells you a lot about happiness. Here's what Peter wrote. If ye be reproached... That's Christian.

If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. You see, when you're saved, you're the joy that the world knows nothing about. You know, even way back in the Old Testament, what wonderful words of Moses, happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people, feared by the Lord.

You know, some of us tried to dip our toe and even our foot into this world's pleasures. I want to tell you, I never got the happiness in this world that I now have. And I sometimes think if ever I got away from the Lord, and a Christian could.

And if I went back into this world, I would even now acknowledge to you, the joys of earth can never fill. The soul that's tasted of God's love, he's happy. We're going to see why he's happy.

There's a reason for it. He wasn't always happy like this. But this man's happy.

Two years he's languished in that prison, over two years. Spartan and harsh circumstances. And he comes out into this august gathering, this pomp and glory situation, with a prison chains on him.

And he starts and says, I think myself happy. Oh, how happy are they who the Savior obeyed and have laid up their treasure above. Tongue can never express the sweet comfort and peace of a soul in its earliest love.

You know, I'll never forget the night I could see him. I got a joy in my heart that night I never knew before. And I want to tell you, I've still got it.

And why is he happy? The passage tells you. We come down to verses six and seven. I'd like to see more about that happiness.

We'll just leave it for the sake of time. We come down to verses six and seven. And it's very interesting.

In the middle of verse six, he speaks these words, the hope, the hope, the hope. And then we look again at these verses and we discover when we come down to verse number seven, he's at it again. He refers to the hope again.

And still in verse number seven, he says, for which hope's sake, King Agrippa. Oh, what a wonderful, for which hope's sake, I'm accused of the Jews. So the Bible doesn't only tell you a lot about happiness, but the Bible tells you a lot about hope.

Do you know why the man's happy? Because he's got hope. That's the point. He's happy because he's got hope.

You know, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand. He's happy because he's got hope. Now, if you're not saved, you don't have any hope.

Now, the Bible is crystal clear about this. Absolutely clear. Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesians about eight years after they could see him.

And in the second chapter, here's what he said to them. He took them back to their own converted days. He says, man, at that time, you were without Christ, having no hope.

Isn't that amazing? He makes it just so fundamentally clear. They hadn't got Christ, therefore they hadn't got hope. And if you haven't Christ as your saviour, you couldn't possibly have any hope.

It's a great thing, you see. You know, in a Worcester cathedral in this country, there's a very ancient slab with a Latin word on it. Miserimus, meaning most miserable.

Imagine that in a cathedral. You know what that proves to me? It proves to me religion doesn't save you and religion doesn't make you happy. Most miserable.

In the catacombs, those underground burial chambers where the Christians fled in the midst of fierce persecution, there's a stone with a Latin inscription on it. Felicimus means most happy, probably marking the burial spot of a martyr who died with hope, with hope. You see, if you're not saved, Paul writes to the Thessalonians and he writes about others or the rest who have no hope.

This man has got hope. You know, the Bible says, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. Thank God tonight for all who are saved in the tent because we've got hope and we're happy because of the hope.

And you couldn't be happy if you haven't hope. What is the hope? Listen what Paul writes to the Colossians, chapter 1 and verse 27. He writes these words, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ in you. You see, if you haven't Christ, you haven't hope. Even to the Romans in chapter 5 and verse 2, he writes to them that they rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

So that's what it is to be saved. You've got hope. And if you're not saved, and I've got to tell you tonight, I hope with some tenderness in my heart, if you're not saved, you don't have any hope of the glory of God.

That's chapter 5 and verse 2, the Romans rejoicing in hope. Chapter 12 and verse 12, rejoicing in hope. It's a great thing to be saved because of good hope.

You know, I'm just a few hundred miles as it was from my own home. You know, when I put my head on the pillow, whatever time it is, tonight or in the morning, you see, I put my head on the pillow and I have real hope. If I don't awaken in this world in the morning, I'll already be in heaven without a shadow of a doubt.

Here's a man and he's happy because he's got hope. If you're not saved, you've no hope. I want to keep moving because this happy man who's got hope is a man with a history.

Everybody in this tent has got a history. Every one of you, no matter how young you are. Some of the little ones here, maybe some of you are bigger.

Your mother could tell you a bit about your early history. Maybe any feeding problems you had with you. Everybody here has got a history.

And you see, there's a thing about, you know, when you've got a hope, you can talk about it. You say, what do you mean? Well, Peter wrote in his first letter, chapter 3, in verse 15, be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that's in you with meekness and fear. So this man's going to explain, really.

He's going to give an explanation now for this hope. He tells him his history. Verse 4, here's what he says, my manner of life from my youth up.

So he starts at the beginning. Tells him his name is in Jerusalem. And he tells him all about his history.

He tells him about how dramatically religious he was. I mean, this man saw Tarsus before he was saved. Do you know what he was? He was perhaps the brightest rising star theologically in the nation of Israel.

You ready to get after him? I get it from Galatians chapter 1. He says, I was advanced among many of mine own age and mine own nation, among my own countrymen. He was zealously religious, deeply religious. And he says, he's the straightest sect of our religion.

I lived a Pharisee, but that didn't give him hope. That didn't give him hope. And that didn't make him happy.

No, there was something else in his history. And he tells him about it here. You see, you come to verse number 13, he tells about a particular day.

And he says, at midday, O king, in other words, this man who's happy, who's got hope, he singles out a day in his history. O day he would never forget. What a happy day.

Have you got one? I want to tell you I have one. Told those of you who were here about it last Thursday night. And I'm going to urge you all to come and hear Brother Peter Orosok on Thursday night.

Because if my story was interesting, I think his is more interesting. And do your best to come, fill up the tent. Because everybody needs a day in their history.

I'm not talking about the day you were christened. I was christened, but that didn't do anything for me. I'm talking about a day in your consciousness.

A day in your life's experience when you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior. You see, the man who's happy and who's filled with hope has a day in his history. He could tell you all about how deeply religious he was.

He could tell you all about how profoundly educated he was. But none of those things saved him and none of them gave him hope. None of them made him happy.

But there's a day of conversion. Oh, I would to God tonight, in this gospel tent, some of you will really take this into your own heart and realize I have many things in my life, but I do not of a time. You see, Paul

could have told you when it happened.

He does it here. He could tell you where it happened. It was on the Jerusalem-Damascus road as he approached, got close to Damascus.

He could tell you when it happened, where it happened, and how it happened. Can you do that? You're not going to heaven if you can't. You don't have to have as long a story as you'll hear on Thursday night from Brother Peter Orris or as long a story as I maybe gave last Thursday night.

Because no matter how long the story is, nobody's saved no matter how long the story is if there isn't a point and a time when they got linked to Christ by faith. Only trust Him. Come on, young woman.

Only trust Him. Only trust Him. Only trust Him now.

He will save you. He will save you. He will save you now.

Now, I want to move on from the preaching to the preaching. You see, do you know one thing that jumps out of this passage? I didn't read it all. There's a thing about this preaching that was deep.

Now, I know it was Paul's defense. I'm aware of all of that. But even though it's his defense, you have to admit something.

Any of you who see your Bible scholars here, you have to admit something. Maybe it was his defense before Agrippa, but he didn't miss the gospel. He certainly didn't.

And here's what I want you to notice about the preaching. It was deeply personal. Did you know in these verses, nine times, nine times at least, he directs his message to Agrippa.

And if ever you're going to be saved and you know what you're going to have to do, you've got to take the message personally to you. See, the night I got saved, sitting in the little Druvena Gospel Hall, I want to tell you something. There might as well have been, the hall was full, but there might as well have been nobody else there because I was just listening for myself.

You've got to take the message personally if you're going to get saved. Stop thinking it's for the other man or that woman over there would need to be saved. You've got to take it to yourself.

You know, a number, well, two or three months ago now in a portable hall preaching, you know, after the meeting was over and we're very conscious that everybody had left the hall except one man, a man in his early fifties. It was the second night just to come to the meetings. He sat on and one of the brethren went over to speak to him and that was good.

We just let the brother go and speak to him. But here's what he asked the brother. Who told those two men all about me? They were preaching at me tonight.

We didn't even know who he was. Well, the point is he was taking it personally to himself and you won't get saved until you take the message for yourself. You've been hearing about sin and rightly so.

You take that warning in regard to sin, just you take it to yourself. So first of all, the preaching was personal. And the next thing I want you to notice about the gospel is the gospel has a great purpose.

This is where the pain comes in. At the beginning of verse number 18, here's what the purpose of the gospel is. Our part of the great purpose is to open their eyes.

Now that can be painful. I was just speaking on the phone to a young woman this morning at 27. She's been interviewed by the elders of the assembly.

She's going to get baptized. She just saved a few weeks ago. She sat in the gospel hall and she looked at that chart and she sat on the first night she was in the hall and she looked at it and she thought, I'm not in that broad road.

No way am I in that broad road. I'm all right as I am. You see, she needed to get her eyes open and Tracy got her eyes open.

Oh, I feel it pleading with you tonight in the words of William Blaine. Now let us turn our thoughts below upon the filling pit of woe and ask the question, who will dwell with the tormenting flame of hell? The gate is wide, the way is broad that takes the soul away from God. Yet never man in hell shall mourn who has not had a chance to turn.

Whether he be a heathen, wild or born a Christian's favored child, God will not suffer you to go unwarned to everlasting woe. Be good and get your eyes open tonight. And then we look at this verse again, verse number 18.

We find that not only is the purpose of the gospel to open their eyes, but there's a provision in the gospel. You know what it is? Three words, three of the most beautiful words in the Bible. Forgiveness of sins.

I'll tell you that you could go home. Any wonder he's happy. Any wonder he's happy because he knows all his sins are forgiven.

I'll tell you that will make you happy. Robert Murray McShane on one occasion, the young man called John. His parents were very disturbed with John.

His parents were saved. And John was leaving home and going away somewhere else in Scotland to work. And his parents were so burdened about him because he wasn't saved.

And they went to Robert Murray McShane. Well, Robert Murray McShane said that and he wrote him a letter. Now, some of you believers here tonight who've got memoir and remains of Robert Murray McShane, you'll find this in the book and I'll give you the approximate wording.

He said, I wrote a dear John letter. Said, dear John, I understand you've moved away from Dundee. I hope you'll be happy.

But wouldn't you be happier if your sins were forgiven? John, I hope it won't be long until you'll find suitable work and that you'll be happy in the job. But wouldn't you be happier if your sins were forgiven? No doubt, John, it won't be long until you make friends in your new location. And you'll be happy.

But wouldn't you be happier if your sins were forgiven? And so the letter went on and John read it and he put it down. We all know about his business. He came back and read the letter again.

And this business of forgiveness of sin. He couldn't get it out of his head. And he realized, I'm not happy because my sins are not forgiven.

And it wasn't long until John got his sins forgiven by faith in Christ. You could get that tonight in the tent. There's something else I want you to notice in this verse.

Oh, the purpose of the gospel, sure to open their eyes. And the provision of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins. However, there's a principle.

How do you get it? That's an Ulster way of saying it, you know. How do you get it? Well, how do you get this out? How do you get your sins forgiven? Well, the Lord Jesus told Paul right here. The end of verse 18.

He said, through faith in me, not the preacher. I do talk to people when they're concerned about getting saved. And I'm quite nervous about it.

I make no bones about that. But I always make it clear. Now, the first thing I usually say to them is, no, I can't save you.

And I wouldn't put any pressure on anybody to profess to be saved. We try and help them here, but we don't pressurize them. Because they'll only get saved when they put their faith in Christ.

Now, could you do that tonight? Faith, well, sometimes we say, weeping will not save you. And working will not save you. And weeping will not save you.

But I'll tell you this. Faith in Christ will save you. Sinner, trust God's risen son.

Trust the work that he has done. You've been hearing of the work. Finished work.

Trust the work that he has done. To his arms now, quickly run. Faith in Christ will save you.

But maybe you have the problem this man had. A problem about persuasion. That's what the word faith means, by the way.

Faith means to be fully persuaded. And wouldn't it be good if there's someone sitting in the tent tonight, and if you think of the Lord Jesus and all he did in that cross, because Paul said here, Christ must need to suffer. And you think of what he did in the cross, and it'd be good if you were fully persuaded tonight.

He did it for me. For me. It was for me.

Yes, all for me. Oh, love of God, so great, so free. Oh, wondrous love.

I shudder and sing. He died for me. My Lord the King.

It's not for Peter or I to tell anybody what to do, but whenever you revise this book, I could recommend a few good additions to it. Do you know what one would be? Almost persuaded. Now to believe.

Almost persuaded. Christ to receive. The man who wrote that hymn is called Philip Bliss.

You know why he wrote it? Because he sat in a gospel meeting one night, and he listened to a preacher saying, to be almost saved is to be entirely lost. Almost cannot avail. Almost is but to fail.

Almost, that bitter wail, almost but lost. Oh, I would to God tonight, you'd be altogether persuaded. That the man who died on the cross, he died for you.

And trust him as your saviour. And be saved. You see, I often say this, saved on the seat where you sit, because that's what happened to me, and it could happen to you.

May God bless his word to every heart. Shall we pray? Our Father, we look to thee now at the close of this meeting. Our need is very great.

We thank thee, our Father, that we can bring that need to thee. And the need we're thinking of tonight is the need for sinners to be saved from going to hell. And saved for heaven.

And their lives changed. Because our Father, a salvation that doesn't save them from this world, will not save them from going down to hell. So we ask thee to use thy word mightily tonight, and bring them not just to being almost persuaded, but altogether.

That they might trust Christ alone as their saviour. The one who finished the work on the cross. That the very language of their heart might be, I seek no other argument.

I want no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died. And rose again for me.

Bless thy word to every heart, we do pray. In our Lord's worthy name, amen. Now, in closing please, number 159.

Keeping with part of our theme tonight. 159. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. There's a great little hymn. We'll not sing it all, but we will sing verses one and two with the chorus of 159.

And after the introduction, we shall stand.

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