

“Responding to the Gospel - Agrippa”
Acts 26
(Preached at Trinity, August 20, 2008)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 26** we come to Phase III of Paul's trial. He has stood before two Roman governors, Felix and then Festus. In Phase III he is standing before King Agrippa whose full name is Herod Agrippa II, the last in the line of Herods. He is the son of Herod Agrippa I who killed James and was eaten with worms. He is also the great grandson of Herod the great under whom Christ was born.
2. King Agrippa had come to pay a friendly visit to the newly appointed Festus. He brings with him his sister Bernice whom most believe he had improper relations with.
3. After some time the subject of Paul was told by Festus. It would have been interesting to Agrippa not only because he was a judge interested in points of law, but because he was a Jew interested in points of religion. Intrigued, Agrippa wanted to hear Paul personally.
Acts 25:22 – “Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself.”
4. This was somewhat of a relief to Festus because he really didn't have any charge against Paul to send to the emperor. Perhaps Agrippa would have a better understanding of the case against Paul.
Acts 25:25-26 – “But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. ²⁶ Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.”
5. As **Chapter 26** opens we find Paul happily giving his defense. Technically, Paul was not required to attend this gathering. He had already appealed to Caesar which took him out of the jurisdiction of both Festus and Agrippa. But Paul never passed up an opportunity to speak of Christ. Paul's primary motive was not to exonerate himself but to convert his listeners.
6. In **Verses 24 & 28** we find two distinctly different ways men respond to the Gospel of Christ.
 - A. We've already examined the response of Felix in **Chapter 24**. His was one of protracted delay.
Acts 24:25 – “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”
 - a. Many people continue to postpone dealing with Christ because the affairs of today are more important.
 - b. Unfortunately, tomorrow is just as distracting and they delay to the destruction of their soul.

- B. Last time I focused attention Governor Festus.
- a. The response of Festus was one of absolute unbelief
Acts 26:24 – “And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.”
 - b. Festus could no longer contain himself – he interrupted Paul’s defense. His actions were out of place. Paul was speaking before King Agrippa, not Festus – but Festus became enraged
 - c. He saw Paul as a crazed fanatic – over-crazed by religious doctrine
Worldly people can’t understand why anyone would become so obsessed with religion.
 - d. Religious people are fine with cultural Christianity – a Christianity that doesn’t threaten or make demands. They will despise genuine Christianity.
They think we have gone too far.
 - e. The Festuses of the world are the dangerous ones to Christians. They are the ones who have brought persecution throughout history. They aren’t content to simply ignore the Gospel. They respond violently to it.
7. Tonight I want to direct your attention to the third Roman official – King Agrippa. After the outburst of Festus Paul ignored him and turned his attention to the king. How did King Agrippa respond to the Gospel?
- I. Agrippa was almost persuaded, almost converted
Acts 26:28 – “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”
- A. Agrippa was convinced of the truth of the Gospel
1. There is some disagreement as to the meaning of Agrippa’s words as reflected in the various translations.
 - a. Some say his words were sarcastic
“Do you think you can convince me to be a Christian in such a short period of time?” (reflected in **ESV, NIV** as a question)
 - b. Could it be, however, that Agrippa was stirred by the words spoken by Paul and was so close to surrendering his will to Christ.
KJV - “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”
^{NAS} **Acts 26:28** – “And Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”
 2. Agrippa agreed with all of the facts. He was convinced of the truth of the Gospel message.
 - a. He knew the Scriptures. He was a Jew brought up in the Jewish traditions.
Acts 26:27 – “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.”
 - b. He had also heard of Christ
 - a. His great grandfather was the Herod who sought to have Christ killed as a child.
 - b. His father was the Herod who had James executed.
 - c. He would have heard much about Jesus

- c. Paul also stressed how much the fame of Christ had spread abroad.
Acts 26:26 – “For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.”
 - d. Paul had spoken the message of the Gospel clearly and plainly. From Paul’s perspective the things he was teaching was above any argument.
3. Why then did Agrippa not flee to Christ in faith and repentance?
Because he had too much invested in this world
- a. The love of this world is what will keep countless millions of people from everlasting life.
Matthew 13:22 – “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”
Matthew 19:23-24 – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”
 - b. What would others say? What would the Jews think? They would have been furious. Their fury against Paul would have been directed towards Agrippa.
 - c. What would the Roman authorities think? They had crucified Christ.
 - d. What would Festus think? He had just declared Paul mad.
4. Could it be that although Agrippa was convinced of the truth of the Gospel he was not willing to give up his position?
Acts 25:23 – “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 Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.”
- a. The word for “pomp” is **φαντασία** from which we get our word fantasy. It refers to great show or something flashy.
 - b. Agrippa loved showing off his royal position. Did he get this from his father?
Acts 12:21-23 – “And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. ²² And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* ²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”
 - c. Agrippa loved the pomp and attention. What a contrast Paul must have presented when this short, bald, unimposing man walked into the midst of the pageantry. God’s people are not interested in personal pomp. We serve the one true King.

4. Could it also be that he had so much invested in the Jewish religion. To receive Christ would require abandoning Judaism.
Matthew Henry – “Agrippa saw a great deal of reason for Christianity; the proofs of it, he owns, are strong, and such as he cannot answer; the objections against it trifling, and such as he cannot for shame insist upon; so that if it were not for his obligations to the ceremonial law, and his respect to the religion of his fathers and of his country, or his regard to his dignity as a king and to his secular interests, he would turn Christian immediately.”
 5. Could it also be that although he was convinced of the truth of the Gospel but was not willing to forsake his sin?
 - a. Don’t forget, this woman posing as his queen is actually his sister.
 - b. Few are willing to forsake the pleasures of sin. It demands having our hearts turned to Christ.
- B. How many people do we know like Agrippa?
1. They are not vicious against the Gospel like Festus. In fact many of them are quite religious.
 2. They are favorable towards the Gospel. They are polite when you speak to them of Christ.
 3. Perhaps they hear a message and are stirred to their very soul. They are sure that these things apply to them. They are almost persuaded but then they go away and the feeling passes.
James 1:23-24 – “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴ For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”
 4. They are almost persuaded. They believe the truths but they have not cast their lot with Christ. They haven’t given themselves to follow Him. They haven’t rested their soul with Christ.
 5. They are not prepared to follow Christ completely
- C. Almost isn’t close enough.
1. Many religious people will find themselves cast out.
Almost saved is to be totally lost.
 2. An airplane that makes it almost to the runway will not safely land
The mother in labor that makes it almost to the hospital still delivers in the backseat.
The student who almost makes a passing grade still fails the class.
 3. A man who almost receives Christ still goes to hell.
- D. In many ways Agrippa was like Felix
1. He might have been waiting for a better time. Some other time when perhaps others were not watching.
 2. Jesus will not have this kind of profession
Matthew 10:32-33 – “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³ But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

Conclusion:

1. Multitudes are blessed in hearing the Gospel but they still go to hell.
Perhaps they are like Felix who continued to delay.
Perhaps they are like Festus who considered these truths to incredible to believe.
Perhaps they are like Agrippa who came so close, and yet still perished in his sins.
2. The Gospel demands that we believe today. It demands that we trust in spite of what the world says to the contrary. It demands that we believe fully and completely. Almost is not good enough.
3. The common thread in all three of these Roman leaders is pride. They would not humble themselves to follow Christ. There were too many things that kept them from Christ.
4. Christ is worthy of our life. Has He captivated your heart?