



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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Hello, my name is Doctor David Thorne.

Today's sermon is titled "Almost Doesn't Do It".

Today's scripture lesson comes from Acts chapter 26 verses 13 to 28.

Starting at verse 13.

King Agrippa, while on the road at midday, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, shining around me and those traveling with me.

We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice speaking to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

"Then I said, 'Who are You, Lord?'

"And the Lord replied: 'I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen

and of what I will reveal to you.

I will rescue you from the people and from the Gentiles. I now send you to them to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that by faith in Me they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified.'

"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple complex and were trying to kill me.

To this very day, I have obtained help that comes from God, and I stand and testify to both small and great, saying nothing else than what the prophets and Moses said would take place, that the Messiah must suffer, and that as the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles.”

As he was making his defense this way, Festus exclaimed in a loud voice, “You’re out of your mind, Paul. Too much study is driving you mad!”

But Paul replied, “I’m not out of my mind, most excellent Festus. On the contrary, I’m speaking words of truth and good judgment.

For the king knows about these matters. It is to him I am actually speaking boldly. For I am convinced that none of these things escapes his notice, since this was not done in a corner.

King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe.”

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Are you going to persuade me to become a Christian so easily?”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

Beloved congregation, I want to speak to you today about one of the most tragic phrases in all of Scripture. It's found in Acts chapter 26 verse 28, where King Agrippa responds to the Apostle Paul's powerful witness

with these words: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

"Almost." What a heartbreaking word. What a damning word. What a dangerous word.

The story of King Agrippa "almost" believing Paul's witness about Jesus has been repeated countless times since that day, with other characters taking King Agrippa and Paul's roles.

Countless men and women have been told about God's love, Jesus' sacrifice, and Their invitation to believe-and the same response of King Agrippa has been given, "I am almost ready to believe."

But when do those who have been "almost" ready to believe actually believe? Sadly, most do not. And many never get another opportunity, as they are ushered into eternity still unbelieving.

Church, I want you to understand this morning that "almost" just doesn't do it. "Almost" saved is completely lost. "Almost" a Christian is altogether condemned. "Almost" doesn't do it.

Let us examine this passage together and learn from the tragic example of a king who had everything he needed to be saved-but walked away without Christ.

Paul had accumulated many enemies because of his fearless preaching about Jesus. He had been beaten, lied about, imprisoned, and now he stood in chains before the king, who had given Paul the opportunity to speak on his own behalf.

Now, I want you to think about this for a moment. What would you or I want to say on our behalf if we found ourselves in the same situation? Given the opportunity to speak before a king who held our fate in his hands?

Would we begin to tell the judge how innocent we were? How others had lied about us? Would we give a dozen reasons why we should be released? Would we plead for mercy, for freedom, for our rights?

But who among us would do as Paul did, and not utter a single word of defense, but instead try to win the judge and king to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Paul asked the king to be patient and hear him out. And what was Paul about to do? He was about to tell the king how he could be freed from the chains of cowardice, pride, lust, and sin, and how he could have eternal life.

Paul began by telling his background. He recounted his life as a Pharisee, his persecution of the church, his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, and then what the Prophets had said about the promised One, how He would come, suffer, die, and rise from the dead.

Paul never grew tired of talking about Jesus. From the day he was saved to this very day, he was witnessing to the king. He never missed an opportunity to witness for the Lord. Here before the king stood Paul, highly educated, the greatest teacher, the most profound theologian, perhaps the greatest soul winner of all time. Paul could answer any of the king's questions. He was more than capable of defending himself. But the king turned Paul down.

One of the listeners butted in during Paul's witness and blurted out that Paul was insane. Festus, the Roman governor, cried out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." But Paul responded with dignity and power, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely." Then Paul turned directly to Agrippa, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

And here comes the tragic response that has echoed through the ages, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

If ever a man had the wonderful opportunity to be saved, it was this king Agrippa. He had a personal audience with the greatest apostle. He heard the gospel presented clearly and powerfully. He knew the Scriptures.

He was deeply moved. And yet he said "no." He almost said yes, but he said "no."

Today, YOU have another chance to be saved. Right now. You could have already died and gone to Hell, but you didn't, and you have another chance to be saved right now. Take it.

Do you know somebody who was suddenly stricken down, killed, died? Yes, you do. The Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 9 verse 27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

And James chapter 4 verse 14 reminds us, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

There is no place in the Bible that states that you can reject Christ today and be saved tomorrow. There is no guarantee of another opportunity. There is no promise of a second chance after death.

The king knew all about Paul's background, his arrest, his lying accusers. And when Paul got through witnessing, the king also knew how to be saved.

Paul knew that the king believed the Prophets. The king believed what the Bible of his day had to say about the promised One, yet he was still lost. He refused to believe and receive the Messiah his Bible had spoken

about, the One Paul had told him about.

Hear me clearly this morning. It is not enough to KNOW about Jesus Christ. It is not enough to believe everything the Bible says about Jesus Christ. You must RECEIVE Him as your Lord and Savior.

King Agrippa knew about Christ, the Messiah. He believed the recorded Word about the Messiah. But he wasn't saved, and he knew that, too. He was deeply stirred, but he said NO, and it cost him his soul.

If you know what the Bible says about Jesus and how to be saved, and yet die without receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, refusing to trust Him-then you will answer in judgment for the opportunities you have had to be saved.

Look at Matthew chapter 11 verses 20 to 24, where Jesus warned that it was going to be worse for those who have heard the Gospel than for those who never got to hear it.

Worse for those who had opportunities to be saved and refused, than for those who never had the opportunity.

If YOU know how to be saved and refuse to be saved, it will be worse for you than if you had never known. The light you have received will become the standard by which you are judged.

Let me share with you the facts you should know...the foundational truths of the Gospel.

First, You are a sinner, born with a sinful nature. The Bible says in Romans chapter 3 verse 23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Second, You are by nature a child of wrath. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 3 tells us we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Third, You are not a sinner because you sin as much as you sin because you are a sinner. You are not what you are because of what you do, but you do what you do because of what you are.

Sin is not just an action, it is your condition apart from Christ.

Fourth, If you believe you are not a sinner, then you do not believe the Bible. The Scripture declares that "there is none righteous, no, not one" as we see in Romans chapter 3 verse 10.

Fifth, The penalty of sin is death. Romans chapter 6 verse 23 declares, "For the wages of sin is death." This means physical death, and then eternal separation from God in Hell.

Sixth, Jesus Christ came to pay the wages of sin that you might be saved. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" as we see in Luke chapter 19 verse 10.

And John three sixteen tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Let me be clear about something that many preachers avoid... "Almost" saved is not saved at all. You cannot be almost born. You cannot be almost alive. You cannot be almost a Christian. You either are or you are not.

Agrippa stood on the very threshold of eternal life. He was so close. The door was open. The invitation was extended. The truth was made plain. And yet he walked away, almost persuaded, but not quite ready.

There is no such thing in God's economy as a "half saved" person. The Bible knows nothing of partial salvation. You are either in the Kingdom of Light or the domain of darkness.

You either have the Son or you have not life as we see in First John chapter 5 verse 12.

Those who live and die in the "almost" category will face eternal loss. Not the loss of salvation, because they never possessed it. They will face eternal separation from God.

Think about it, beloved. Agrippa walked away from.

Christ who would have forgiven him.

Peace that would have comforted him.

Hope that would have sustained him.

Heaven that would have received him.

Eternal life that would have been his.

He exchanged these eternal treasures for the fleeting pleasures of this world and the approval of men.

What a tragedy... What a loss... What a warning.

The saddest reality of the "almost" Christian is this... they may not have tomorrow. Death comes to all...the prepared and unprepared, the saved and unsaved, the good and the bad.

You may leave this service today thinking, "I'll get saved later. I'll get it right next Sunday. I'll come back next revival. I'll respond to the next altar call."

But what if there is no next Sunday? What if there is no next altar call? What if this is your last opportunity? What if this is your day...and you let it pass?

Proverbs chapter 27 verse 1 warns us, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

The Bible tells us of a rich man who thought he had plenty of time, but God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" as we see in Luke chapter 12 verse 20.

There is no place in the Bible where you can safely presume upon another chance. TODAY is the day of salvation. NOW is the accepted time Second Corinthians six twenty one tells us this.

Beloved, the story of King Agrippa is your story if you are here today without Christ. You have heard the Gospel. You know the truth. You have been moved-perhaps deeply-by the message of God's love and Christ's sacrifice.

But you have not yet received Him. You have not yet been saved.

What are you waiting for?

Are you waiting for a more convenient season? Are you waiting for a more powerful sermon? Are you waiting until you've cleaned up your life enough? Are you waiting to discuss it with your family? Are you waiting for a sign?

Agrippa had every advantage and every opportunity...and he missed it all because he was "almost", but not quite persuaded.

Let me speak directly to those who have been "almost" persuaded before. You've felt that drawing of the Spirit before. You've heard the Gospel more than once. You've considered giving your life to Christ, maybe even more than once. You've sat in services just like this one and felt that tug on your heart.

But you walked away. You put it off. You said, "Not yet."

And here you still are, by God's grace-with another opportunity. Will you be like Agrippa and say "no one more time"? Will you walk out of this place unsaved, unrepentant, unforgiven?

I want you to understand something. The most dangerous position in all the world is NOT that of the obstinate sinner who denies everything. The most dangerous position is that of the one who KNOWS the truth,

who BELIEVES the truth, who feels the pull of the Spirit...and yet refuses to bow the knee.

Almost persuaded, but lost.

So near to heaven, yet bound for hell.

So close to Christ, yet a stranger to grace.

Wait no longer. Come to Jesus now.

Let me also speak to those who have walked away from Christ after knowing Him. If you have backslidden, if you have drifted, if you have allowed sin to separate you from fellowship with God, these verses speak to you as well. Don't be "almost" in your restored relationship either. Come back fully. Come back completely. Come back today.

And if you have been putting off a commitment to full surrender as a believer-"almost" surrendering your life to His service, "almost" giving of your resources, "almost" taking up your cross-hear the warning of Agrippa.

There is no blessing in "almost." There is no power in "almost." There is only loss and regret.

Today is your day. Now is your moment.

As we come to this sacred time, I want to invite you to respond to what you've heard. The invitation is open. The door is before you. Christ stands ready to receive all who come.

If you have never truly been saved, if you've been "almost" persuaded but never actually received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I invite you to come forward.

Don't wait for another day. Don't let another opportunity pass. Come forward right now.

If you have been a "perennial altar sitter"...one who has come close but never truly surrendered, come today. Come with full surrender. Come with complete trust.

Parents, if you have children who are "almost" saved, "almost" ready to trust Christ, bring them to the altar today. Let this be the day they come all the way to Jesus.

If you're unsure of your salvation, if you have doubts, it's better to settle that today than to go into eternity "almost" sure but not quite ready.

Come.

The pews are open. The aisles are clear. The invitation is yours.

You may not have tomorrow. You may not have another service like this. You may not have another opportunity.

Come today.

Please bow your heads with me while we pray.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You now with grateful hearts, but also with solemn awareness of the warning we have heard. We thank You for Your Word and for the example of Paul's bold witness before King Agrippa.

We thank You for the courage He displayed in the face of persecution, for the clarity with which He presented the Gospel, and for his concern for the soul of the man who held his chains.

But Father, we also tremble at the warning of Agrippa's response. We see in him what we do not want to be-a picture of one who was "almost" persuaded but never truly converted. Lord, keep us from that fate.

Keep us from the delusion of being "almost" saved.

Father, I pray for everyone under the sound of this message who has heard the call of the Spirit to salvation. I pray that this would be the day that hesitation gives way to decision, that fear gives way to faith, that pride gives way to repentance.

For those who have stood on the threshold of salvation time and again, I pray that today they would step through the door. Open their eyes to see that "almost" is not enough. Open their hearts to receive Your Son.

For those who have been faithful in their witness as Paul was, faithful to preach and teach and invite, I pray that they would see fruit from their labors. May Your Word, planted in hearts, spring up unto eternal life.

And Lord, may we leave this place different than we entered. May there be rejoicing in heaven today over those who come to Christ. May there be a great number who can say,

"I am not almost a Christian-I am truly saved, born again, a child of the King."

We ask it all in the precious and powerful name of Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. We ask it knowing that You are faithful, just, and full of grace.

Amen.

As I conclude today's message, here some take away points for you to consider.

Do what you know you should do, do it right now, be saved now, receive the loving Lord while you can. Don't say tomorrow.

Right now, while you know that God is speaking to you, right now while your heart is tender, right now while you are thinking about it, right now while you are still able.

You are facing the greatest decision of your life, you are almost persuaded, make your decision for Jesus Christ right now.

If you are lost, you have never received Jesus Christ and leave here as you came in, there is no way you can know that you will ever have an opportunity as this again.

Will you do as this king did? If you do, you will meet him personally, face to face someday, not in Heaven, but, in Hell.

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed. For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed.

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you all next week.

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