

Almost Persuaded

While being imprisoned in Caesarea, Paul was able to speak to influential political figures. He made a defense and preached to Felix (Acts 24:10-25). Felix trembled at Paul's preaching but left him imprisoned (Acts 24:26-27). Festus (the next governor) reopened Paul's case (Acts 25). He met with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. These wicked men wanted Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem so they could kill him on the journey. Upon realizing that Festus wouldn't bring about justice, Paul appealed his case to Caesar (Acts 25:12).

Before sending Paul to Rome, Festus asked King Agrippa for his help. Agrippa was visiting the newly appointed governor and agreed to hear Paul's defense (Acts 25:13-27).

King Agrippa was the son of the man who killed the apostle James (Acts 12:1-2) and the great-grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1). He was also familiar with the traditions of the Jews and their Law (Acts 26:1-3). The Romans had given him the responsibility of appointing the high priest.

Paul's speech to Agrippa included information about his background as a Jew (Acts 26:1-11), his conversion (Acts 26:12-15), his ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-21), and teaching from the Law and the prophets (Acts 26:22-27).

Hearing this powerful speech, Agrippa said, "In a short time, you will persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). These are among the saddest words in the Bible! What things can stand in the way of someone being fully persuaded to follow Jesus?

Many are unwilling to stop living for themselves.

- They are unwilling to give up sinful and wicked living (Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-19).
- God has a standard for our lives. God has behaviors that He identified as right and wrong. Being a disciple requires ceasing from sin.
- We must stop lying, being sexually immoral, prideful, unkind, unloving, and living undisciplined lives.

Many are unwilling to live for the Lord.

- We put on a "new self" and bear the image of the One who created us (Colossians 3:10).
- We must count the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:27-33). Being a disciple involves forethought, commitment, and dedication.
- Following Jesus goes beyond mere mental assent and getting wet in a baptistry. True disciples strive to faithfully do all of God's will (Matthew 7:21).

Many are unwilling to wear the name of Christ.

- The term "Christian" is used three times in the Bible (Acts 26:28; 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).
- Agrippa is probably using it in a demeaning way. The term is believed to have been used by the world to identify those who followed Christ. It is not the new name given to God's people that Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 62:2-4).
- We never need to be ashamed of the world knowing that we belong to and follow Christ. We are "Christians" and pledge our allegiance to the Savior.

Conclusion:

Paul wanted Agrippa and every person to be saved (Acts 26:29). Sadly, Agrippa did not have the same concern for his soul.