

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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September 23, 2018

“Almost Persuaded”

By Brian Meade

Perhaps one of the saddest songs in our songbook, is the song *“Almost Persuaded.”* What makes this song so particularly sad is that it speaks to us of the tragedy of someone who knows the truth of the gospel, and yet is not persuaded enough to obey it.

As an invitation song, it has some very clear and to the point lyrics that remind us that: (1) Now is the time to obey. (2) Jesus invites us, the angels are watching, and many prayers are offered on behalf of the sinner. (3) And that one day the opportunity to obey will be gone, as the time of *harvest* concludes.

But the most heart-wrenching words of the song are: *“Almost” cannot avail; “Almost” is but to fail; Sad, sad, that bitter wail “Almost but lost!”*

This song, like most other songs in our songbook, is based on a passage of scripture— Acts 26:28, where King Agrippa says to the apostle Paul, *“You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”* (NKJB)

Paul had come before King Agrippa to give his defense of the gospel. He was actually on trial before Agrippa to ascertain whether Paul was a criminal who had broken Roman law or not.

In Acts 22:1-21, Paul gave his defense before the Jews there and was unsuccessful in persuading them of Jesus, the Christ. As a matter of fact, they wanted to put Paul to death and his only escape was to appeal to Roman law, and eventually to Caesar (25:11). Paul is before King Agrippa to determine what the charges are against him (25:23-27).

Paul defends himself by recounting his conversion to Jesus with the events that happened on the way to Damascus (Acts 26: 12-18). He explained how he met the Lord and how that forever changed his perspective of who Jesus really was! He found out that He had been fighting the Lord, as he was persecuting the Lord’s people. He was persuaded by the Lord to go on to Damascus and he would be told what to do (Acts 9:6). Paul did just that, and that is when Ananias told him, *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”* (Acts 22:16) Paul obeyed the gospel and that is why he could say with certainty, *“I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision.”* (Acts 26:19)

Paul said all of his defense to Agrippa to try to bring him to faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. The New American Standard Bible translates Acts 26:28 somewhat differently, as it has: *“Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”* Luke records Paul’s follow-up response in the next verse, *“And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”*

In preaching and teaching the gospel to those who are in need of a Savior, we are in the business of convincing and persuading them of certain central truths of the gospel. The term *“persuade”* is defined as: *“to apply*



persuasion, to prevail upon or win over, to persuade.” Bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations.” (Vines Expository Dictionary)

(1) We Persuade Others to Believe in Jesus.

First of all, we begin converting people to the Lord by teaching them about Jesus, and the role He has in our salvation at the cross. (John 3:16; John 8:24) That is why Paul, when he went to Corinth, “...*determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*”

In the book of Acts 17:2-4, Paul was trying to preach Jesus to the Jews who believed in the coming Messiah. Paul was trying to persuade them that Jesus was the one they were looking for, as Luke records, “*And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.*”

Notice the pattern of such teaching and persuasion in Acts 18:4, “*And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*” And, as Luke closes the book of Acts in chapter 28:23, Paul is still preaching and “*trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.*”

(2) We Persuade Others to Come Out of Sin.

Men and women need to know that sin is undesirable, hurtful, and brings the condemnation of God upon them if they continue in it (Romans 2:5; Colossians 3:5-6). This persuasion is not often easy to do because of the deceitful pleasures that many do not want to give up (Hebrews 11:25). They can be hardened in their pursuit of sin’s pleasures, and very difficult to persuade (Ephesians 4:17-19).

The prevalent sin of Paul’s day was that of idolatry. When Paul came to Ephesus preaching the gospel, he called men to leave this wickedness.

In Acts 19:26, some were not happy about the results of Paul’s preaching as they said, “*You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.*”

Paul was reaching people with the truth of God’s word and persuading them that idolatry was foolish and wrong. His impact was felt even there in Ephesus, where the statues of Artemis (or Diana) were made (Acts 19:23-35).

Paul would, prior to going before King Agrippa, meet with governor Felix in Acts 24:1-25. Paul tried to persuade him to give up sin and obey the gospel, as Luke records, “*But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.” (Acts 24:24-25) That may have been as close as Felix got to being persuaded to repent and obey Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38).*

(3) We Persuade Others to Escape Punishment.

Contrary to the popular opinion of religious error, it is perfectly acceptable to teach and preach to the lost the need to escape the eternal punishment of hell.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:11, “*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...*” We know what awaits the sinner at the Judgment Day, and do the best we can (out of love and concern) to warn them not to persist in sin.

(4) We Persuade Others to go to Heaven.

On the other side of the coin, others may be persuaded by the reward of heaven. We may reach people with the gospel message that gives us the hope of heaven (Col. 1:5). Paul had this hope in 2 Timothy 1:12, “*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*” We all need to be persuaded that heaven is worth any and all sacrifices to get there!

In conclusion: I am convinced that there are different degrees or levels of conviction that people we try to convince of the gospel have:

(1) THE NEVER WILL BE PERSUADED.

There will be those we talk to about obeying the gospel, who simply are not interested in being a Christian. They choose to not even discuss it with us, and may be very against the cause of Christ. It is a sad reality, but they are content to be in a lost condition.

(2) THE SOMEWHAT PERSUADED.

There will be those who are somewhat interested in what the Bible teaches and obedience to it, but it goes no farther than a passing curiosity. To be somewhat convinced is not enough.

(3) THE ALMOST PERSUADED.

There will be those who see the truth of the gospel, like King Agrippa did, and are almost ready to commit to the Lord, but something is still holding them back from a full obedience to Christ. But just as the song we sing, *“Almost cannot avail; Almost is but to fail.”* To almost obey is still NOT obedience!

(4) THE ALTOGETHER PERSUADED & OBEYS.

Then there are those who are fully convinced of their need of salvation from sin and nothing is going to hold them back. They are the ones who have a *“good and honest heart”*(Luke 8:15) and follow through in obedience to the gospel. May God lead us to these souls!

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Betty Hurst, Steve Switcher, Nicky Curtis, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), Charlene Newborn, June Lawson (Lisa Busby’s Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Madeline Flippo, Karey Trimble, Jerry Trimble, Janis Johnson, Delain Doles, and Daniel Holloway, Cameron Hutchinson, and the family of Gail Armstrong (passed away) and Willis Fields (Brandi Meade’s Dad) had heart surgery Friday. Adam Harris has been sick this week as well.

Our Gospel Meeting with Trey Haskett begins Sunday—October 21st to the 26th. (7:00 PM Nightly— Monday thru Friday)

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Russell Briggs
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon: *“Should Christians Fast?”*

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am

Jerry Kennemur
The Book of John (Mike Willis)
Page 41, Question #21

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Jerry Kennemur
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Chris Callahan
Psalm 27:1-4
Song Leader: Lee Busby
Lord’s Table: Fred Johnson
Assisting: Brian Meade & Paul Busby
Song Service: Men of the Congregation Lead Singing
Invitation: Jerry Kennemur
Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Jr.

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

September 26th:

Auditorium Bible Class: Paul Busby
1 & 2 Kings (Mike Willis)
Page 51, Question #10
Invitation: Adam Harris
Song Leader: Russell Briggs
Closing Prayer: Paul Johnson