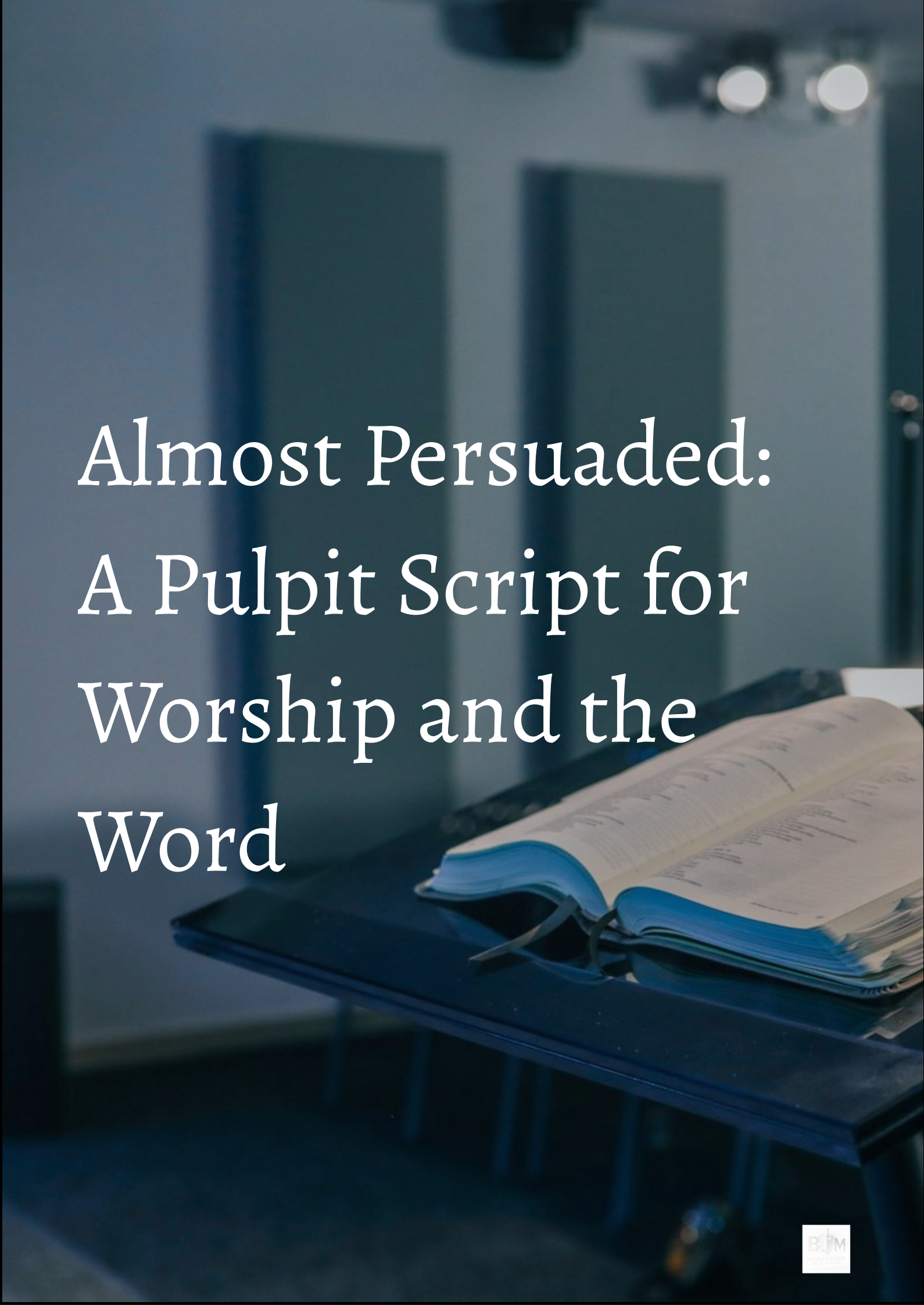




Almost Persuaded: A Pulpit Script for Worship and the Word

Sermon Title: Almost Persuaded

Text: Acts 26:28 KJV

“

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Acts 26:28, KJV

Slide 1 — General Welcome

Good morning, church.

It is good to be in the house of the Lord one more time. The Lord has been faithful, and because He has been faithful, we have reason to worship Him today.

This is the day that the Lord hath made. We did not come to simply attend church. We came to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

So this morning, let us settle our hearts. Let us lay aside the distractions of the week. Let us put our minds on Jesus. Somebody may have walked in tired. Somebody may have walked in burdened. Somebody may have walked in needing direction. But I believe the same God who met people in Scripture is still meeting people today.

We welcome each of you. Whether you are a member, a visitor, family, or friend, we are thankful you are here.

Slide 2 — Call to Worship

“

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Psalm 95:6–7, KJV

At this time, let us prepare our hearts for our call to worship.

We will sing “Footsteps of Jesus,” page 483.

That song reminds us that following Jesus is not just something we talk about. It is something we live. We follow His steps in faith. We follow His steps in obedience. We follow His steps when the road is easy, and we follow His steps when the road gets hard.

As we sing, let us not simply sing words from a hymnal. Let us make it a prayer:
Lord, help me walk where You would have me walk.
Lord, help me follow You more closely.
Lord, help my life match the song I sing.

Church, let us stand together as we sing.



Slide 3 — Prayer and Welcome

Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, in the name of Jesus, we thank You for this day. We thank You for life, health, strength, mercy, and grace. We thank You that You allowed us to gather in Your house one more time.

Lord, we ask that You would be with us in this service. Bless every song, every prayer, every word spoken, and every heart represented here. Remove distractions. Calm troubled minds. Encourage weary spirits. Convict where conviction is needed. Comfort where comfort is needed. Save the lost. Strengthen the saved.

Lord, we do not want to leave the same way we came. We need a touch from heaven. We need Your presence. We need Your Word.

Bless this church. Bless every family. Bless those who are sick, those who are grieving, those who are traveling, and those who wanted to be here but could not.

We ask all of this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Church, you may be seated.

We do want to welcome everyone again this morning. We are thankful you are here.

A few announcements before we continue:

Choir practice will be today at 3:00 PM.

Father's Day will be June 21. We look forward to honoring fathers and father figures on that special day.

Also, Dylan Gasaway will be preaching on June 28. Let us be in prayer for him and come ready to support him as he brings the Word.

Again, we are thankful for what the Lord is doing.

Slide 4 — Offertory Hymn

“Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” — Page 411

At this time, we will prepare for our offertory hymn.

We will sing “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus,” page 411.

There is a sermon in that title by itself. It is sweet to trust Him when you understand everything, but it is also sweet to trust Him when you do not understand anything.

It is sweet to trust Him in the sunshine, and it is sweet to trust Him in the storm. It is sweet to trust Him when the answer comes quickly, and it is sweet to trust Him when you are still waiting.

As we sing this hymn, let us remember that giving is also an act of trust. We give because we trust God. We give because He has given to us. We give because the work of the Lord matters.

Let us worship together through song and through giving.



Slide 5 — Praise Hymn

At this time, we will continue in worship with our praise hymn.

As this song is played, I want us to focus on the goodness of God. Worship is not a performance. Worship is a response. We respond to who God is. We respond to what He has done. We respond to His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness, His strength, and His faithfulness.

The Bible says that God is worthy. He is worthy when life is good. He is worthy when life is heavy. He is worthy when we have the answer, and He is worthy when we are still trusting Him for the answer.

So let us worship Him this morning with grateful hearts.

Slide 6 — Special Music

At this time, we will have our special music.

I want to ask you not to treat this as a transition in the service, but as worship. Let the words minister to you. Let the message of the song prepare your heart for the preaching of the Word.

Sometimes God uses a song to soften the soil before the seed of the Word is planted. Sometimes He uses a melody to remind us of something our hearts have almost forgotten.

So as the special music is presented, let us listen prayerfully and worshipfully.

Slide 7 — Song by Pastor

Before we go into the message this morning, I want to share a song.

My prayer is that this song will help prepare our hearts for the Word of God. The message today is serious. It is a message about being close, but not converted. It is about hearing truth, but not surrendering to truth. It is about a man who came near the kingdom, but as far as Scripture records, walked away with only the words, “Almost.”

So as I sing, I want you to ask the Lord to speak personally to your heart.

Not to your neighbor.

Not to the person behind you.

Not to the person who should have come today but did not.

Lord, speak to me.



Sermon Begins — Slide 8 — Sermon Introduction

Almost Persuaded

Acts 26:28 KJV



Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Acts 26:28, KJV

Our text this morning is found in Acts chapter 26, verse 28.

The Bible says:

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

I want to preach this morning on this subject:

Almost Persuaded: The Tragedy of Coming Close but Not Coming Clean.

There are some words in the Bible that ought to shake us. There are some words that ought to make a man stop and examine his heart. One of those words is the word almost.

Almost.

Almost is a dangerous word.

Almost means near, but not there.
Almost means close, but not complete.
Almost means touched, but not transformed.
Almost means convicted, but not converted.
Almost means the heart was stirred, but the will never surrendered.

Agrippa did not say, "I do not understand."
Agrippa did not say, "I have never heard."
Agrippa did not say, "Paul, your message makes no sense."

No, Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

That is one of the saddest statements in the Word of God.

Because almost saved is still lost.
Almost forgiven is still guilty.
Almost in the ark is still outside the ark.
Almost under the blood is still exposed to judgment.
Almost surrendered is still rebellion dressed up in religious language.

And I want to say this plainly this morning: Hell will not only be filled with people who hated God. Hell will also be filled with people who almost came to Him.

That may sound hard, but it is true.

There are people who almost prayed.
Almost repented.
Almost believed.
Almost forgave.
Almost came to the altar.
Almost got right.
Almost surrendered.

But almost is not enough.



Slide 9 — The Setting

Paul Stands Before Power

Acts 26:1 KJV

“

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

Acts 26:1, KJV

Now let us understand the setting.

Paul is standing before King Agrippa. He is not in a church sanctuary. He is not standing behind a comfortable pulpit. He is not speaking to people who necessarily want revival. Paul is standing in a courtroom setting. He is a prisoner. He is bound. He is being examined.

But I want you to notice something.

Paul may have been the one in chains, but Paul was the freest man in the room.

Agrippa had the crown, but Paul had Christ.
Agrippa had the position, but Paul had peace.
Agrippa had earthly authority, but Paul had eternal assurance.
Agrippa sat in power, but Paul stood in truth.

Do not miss that.

The world often measures freedom by what is on the outside. God measures freedom by what is on the inside.

A person can have money and still be bound.
A person can have a title and still be empty.
A person can have popularity and still be lost.
A person can sit on a throne and still be a prisoner to sin.

Paul was physically chained, but spiritually free.

Agrippa was physically free, but spiritually chained.

That is why this scene matters. It reminds us that the greatest prison is not always made of iron bars. Sometimes the greatest prison is pride. Sometimes it is fear. Sometimes it is reputation. Sometimes it is unwillingness to surrender.

Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak. But what Agrippa did not know was that God was giving Agrippa an opportunity to respond.

Every time the Word of God is opened, it is more than a sermon. It is an opportunity.

Every invitation is an opportunity.
Every conviction is an opportunity.
Every Sunday morning is an opportunity.
Every time God deals with your heart, it is an opportunity.

And we must be careful, because opportunity rejected can become opportunity lost.

Slide 10 — Paul's Testimony

A Changed Life Is Hard to Argue With

Acts 26:8 KJV

“

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Acts 26:8, KJV

Paul begins to give his testimony.

He talks about who he used to be. He talks about how he once opposed the name of Jesus. He talks about how he persecuted believers. He talks about how he had been religious, zealous, educated, and sincere — but sincerely wrong.

That is a word for somebody.

Religion without Christ cannot save.
Sincerity without truth cannot save.
Church attendance without conversion cannot save.
Good works without the blood of Jesus cannot save.
Being close to spiritual things is not the same as being born again.

Paul had religion before Damascus, but he did not have redemption.
Paul had zeal before Damascus, but he did not have salvation.
Paul had knowledge before Damascus, but he had not bowed to Jesus as Lord.

Then Paul met Jesus.

And when Paul met Jesus, everything changed.

He did not just turn over a new leaf. He received a new life.

He did not just become a better version of Saul. He became a new creature in Christ.

That is what salvation does. Salvation changes a person.

Now, I know we are living in a day where folks want just enough Jesus to feel better, but not enough Jesus to live different.

But Bible salvation still changes people.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things pass away. All things become new.

Paul was saying to Agrippa, “I once was blind, but now I see.”

And church, there is power in a testimony.

People may argue with your theology.
They may debate your doctrine.
They may question your background.
They may criticize your past.

But it is hard to argue with a changed life.

When a person can say, “Jesus saved me, changed me, and set me on a new path,” that carries weight.

Paul's testimony was not, “Look what I did.”
Paul's testimony was, “Look what Jesus did.”

And that ought to be every believer's testimony.



Slide 11 — The Gospel Was Clear

This Thing Was Not Done in a Corner

Acts 26:26 KJV

“

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.

Acts 26:26, KJV

Paul tells Agrippa, “King, you know about these things.”

In other words, Agrippa was not ignorant. He had heard enough. He knew enough. He had been exposed to enough truth to respond.

Paul said, “This thing was not done in a corner.”

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not some secret hidden in the shadows. God did not whisper the Gospel into a corner and hide it from mankind. Jesus was crucified publicly. He rose victoriously. The message of Christ had spread. The testimony was known.

Agrippa had light.

And here is the danger: when God gives light, we become responsible for what we do with that light.

Some people say, “I just do not know enough.”

But often the issue is not that we do not know enough. The issue is that we have not obeyed what we already know.

Agrippa did not need more information. He needed surrender.

That is where many people are today.

They know Jesus saves.

They know they need forgiveness.

They know life is short.

They know eternity is real.

They know the Spirit of God has dealt with them.

They know they need to get right.

But knowing is not the same as yielding.

A person can know the truth and still reject the truth.

A person can sit under preaching for years and still not be saved.

A person can sing hymns and still not be surrendered.

A person can own a Bible and still not obey the Bible.

A person can know the plan of salvation and still never personally receive the Saviour.

Agrippa knew.

But knowing alone did not save him.

Slide 12 — The Question That Cornered the King

Believest Thou?

Acts 26:27 KJV

“

King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Acts 26:27, KJV

Now Paul does something bold.

He moves from explanation to invitation.

He moves from testimony to confrontation.

He moves from preaching generally to pressing personally.

He looks at Agrippa and says, “Believest thou?”

That is the question.

Not, “Do you admire Paul?”

Not, “Do you enjoy religious conversation?”

Not, “Do you appreciate tradition?”

Not, “Can you quote the creed by memory?”

The question is: Do you believe?

That is still the question today.

Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?

Do you believe He died for your sins?

Do you believe He rose again?

Do you believe you are a sinner in need of a Saviour?

Do you believe enough to repent?

Do you believe enough to surrender?

Do you believe enough to stop hiding behind excuses?

Paul did not let Agrippa remain neutral.

And let me tell you something: the Gospel does not leave us neutral.

When Jesus is preached, a person must do something with Him.

You either receive Him or reject Him.



Slide 13 — Almost Is Not Enough

Almost Persuaded

Acts 26:28 KJV

“

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Acts 26:28, KJV

There it is.

The tragedy of almost.

Agrippa had listened.

Agrippa had understood.

Agrippa had felt the pressure of truth.

Agrippa had been brought right to the edge.

But instead of surrendering, he said, “Almost.”

There are many ways people say almost.

Some say, “Preacher, one day.”

Some say, “Not right now.”

Some say, “I need to get some things straight first.”

Some say, “When I get older.”

Some say, “When life slows down.”

Some say, “I know I need to.”

Some say, “I have been thinking about it.”

Some say, “I am close.”

But close is not converted.

If a man almost catches the rope thrown to him while he is drowning, he still drowns.

If a person almost gets on the ark before the flood, they are still outside when the rain comes.

If a person almost takes the medicine, the disease still remains.

If a person almost receives Christ, they are still lost.

Almost is one of Satan’s favorite words.

Satan does not mind a person being almost persuaded, as long as they are not altogether surrendered.

He does not mind conviction, as long as it never becomes conversion.

He does not mind tears, as long as there is no repentance.

He does not mind church attendance, as long as there is no new birth.

He does not mind religious talk, as long as there is no total surrender to Jesus Christ.

Almost.

That is a dangerous place to live.

Almost persuaded means the heart was close enough to feel truth, but stubborn enough to resist it.

And I wonder this morning how many people have lived in almost.

Almost forgiving.

Almost praying.

Almost surrendering.

Almost serving.

Almost getting right.

Almost stepping out.

Almost obeying the call of God.

Slide 14 — Paul's Heart

Altogether, Not Almost

Acts 26:29 KJV

“

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.

Acts 26:29, KJV

Paul's response is powerful.

Agrippa says, "Almost."

Paul says, "Altogether."

That is the difference.

Agrippa is talking about hesitation.
Paul is talking about salvation.

Agrippa is talking about being close.
Paul is talking about being complete.

Agrippa is talking about almost.
Paul is talking about altogether.

Paul says, "I would to God..."

That phrase shows us Paul's heart. Paul was not trying to win an argument. He was trying to win a soul.

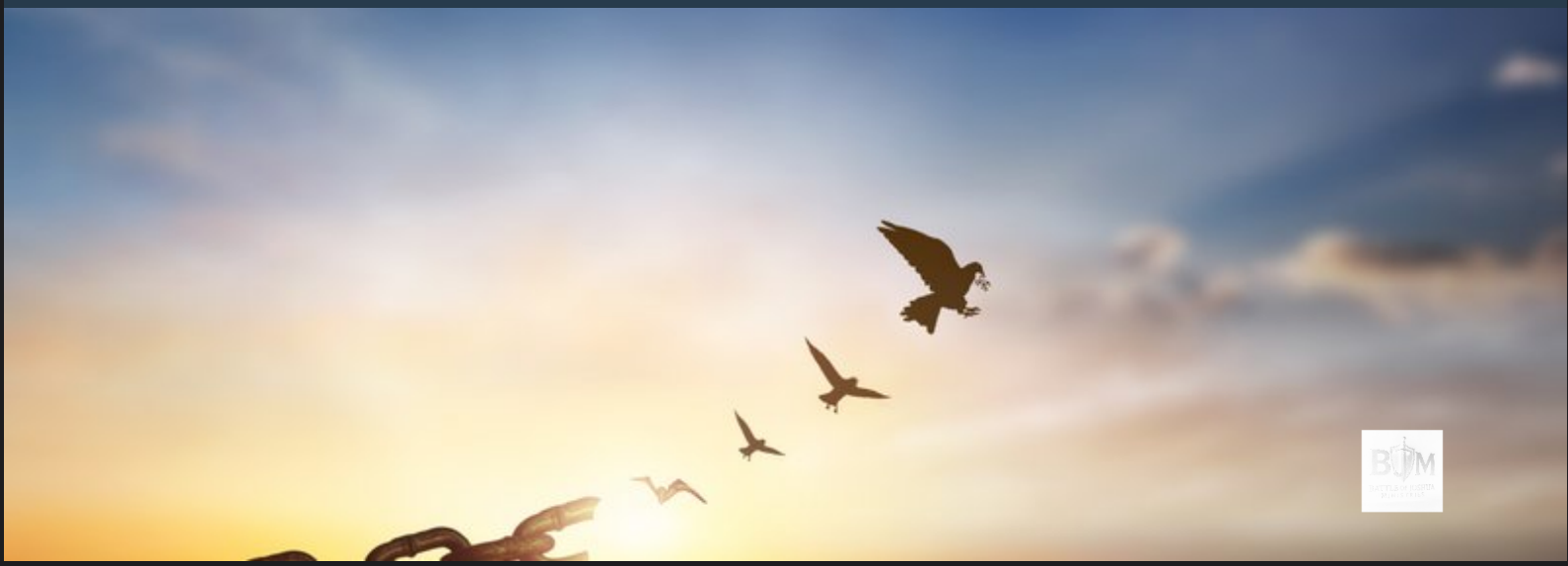
Paul did not look at Agrippa with hatred.
He did not look at Agrippa with pride.
He did not look at Agrippa as an enemy to defeat.

He looked at Agrippa as a soul who needed Jesus.

That ought to challenge us.

Do we still care about souls?

Do we still weep over lost people?
Do we still pray for family members who are not saved?



Slide 15 — The Warning

You Can Be Close and Still Miss Christ

Here is the warning from Agrippa's life:

You can be close and still miss Christ.

Agrippa heard the truth.
Agrippa understood the truth.
Agrippa felt the pull of the truth.
Agrippa still walked away from the truth.

That is terrifying.

It is possible to hear the Gospel and not be saved.
It is possible to feel conviction and not be changed.
It is possible to be moved emotionally and not be born again.
It is possible to sit in church and still be lost.

That is why we must not confuse proximity with salvation.

Being near the church is not the same as being in Christ.
Being around Christians is not the same as being a Christian.
Knowing Bible language is not the same as knowing the Lord.
Having a religious background is not the same as having a redeemed soul.

Agrippa was near Paul, but far from surrender.

And the Bible gives us no record that Agrippa ever came back and said yes.

That is sobering.

Because we are not promised another invitation.

We are not promised another Sunday.
We are not promised another sermon.
We are not promised another altar call.
We are not promised another breath.

The danger of saying "not now" is that the heart can become harder every time it says it.

The same sun that melts wax hardens clay.

The same Gospel that softens one heart can harden another when it is repeatedly rejected.

So do not play games with conviction.

If God is dealing with your heart, respond.

If God is calling you to salvation, respond.

If God is calling you back to obedience, respond.

If God is calling you to forgive, respond.

If God is calling you to surrender, respond.

Do not leave almost.

Slide 16 — The Invitation

Do Not Leave Almost

2 Corinthians 6:2 KJV

“

(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

2 Corinthians 6:2, KJV

Notice the word: now.

Not tomorrow.

Not later.

Not when everything is convenient.

Not when life gets easier.

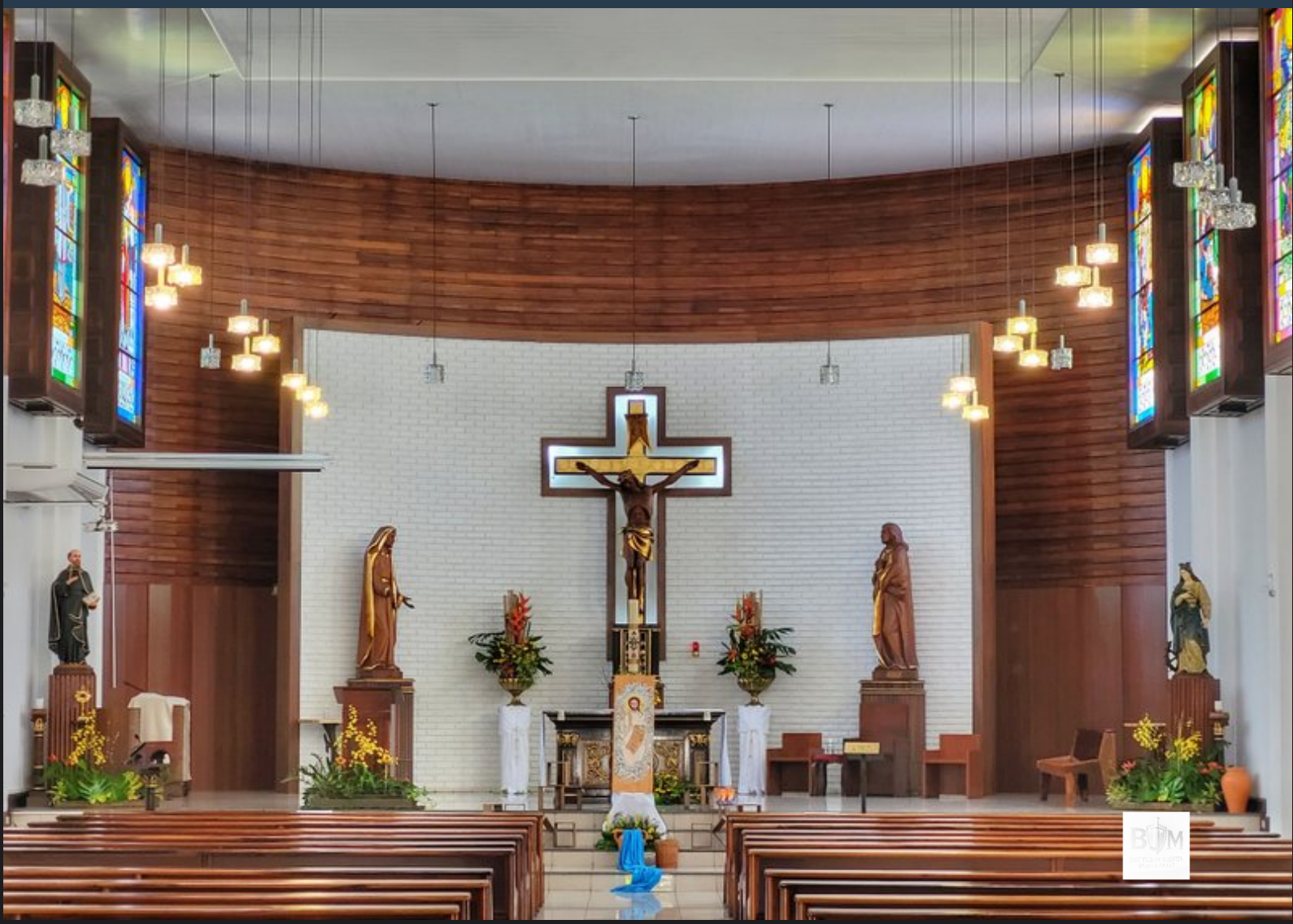
Not when the calendar clears.

Not when you feel more religious.

Now.

Now is the accepted time.

Now is the day of salvation.



Slide 17 — Closing Thought

Almost Persuaded Is Eternally Dangerous

As we close, I want to leave this thought with you:

Almost persuaded is eternally dangerous.

Agrippa had Paul in front of him.
He had the Gospel preached to him.
He had truth presented clearly.
He had the opportunity to respond.

But his recorded response was almost.

And almost was not enough.

Church, do not be almost convinced. Be altogether surrendered.

Do not be almost saved. Be born again.

Do not be almost obedient. Follow the Lord.

Do not be almost right with God. Get right with God.

Do not be almost faithful. Be faithful.

Do not be almost forgiven. Come to the One who can wash every sin away.

Jesus went all the way to Calvary.

He carried the cross.
He shed His blood.
He died for sinners.
He was buried.
He rose again.
He lives today.
And He is able to save.

The question is not whether Jesus is able.

The question is: will you come?

As we stand, as the invitation is given, if God has spoken to your heart, come.

Do not leave this place almost.

Come altogether.

