

**Almost Persuaded****Acts 26:24–27:13**

Paul had been giving his defense and testimony before King Agrippa and many other people, including his Jewish accusers. Before this, he had done the same in front of the governor of the region, Festus, and before that Felix. While defending himself against the charges made by the unbelieving Jews, Paul had appealed that he go to Rome and have his case heard by the emperor. Before he was sent to Rome, he spoke with King Agrippa. Paul finished saying that he was only preaching Jesus Christ and had never gone against Moses or anything written in the Scriptures.

**King Agrippa's reaction**

King Agrippa had originally wanted to hear Paul's case because he was an expert in the ways and customs of the Jews. Paul ended his defense saying that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and gave him the task of preaching salvation to the unbelieving Jews and to the Gentiles. It seems that every time he mentions going to the Gentiles that there is a strong negative reaction. This instance is no different.

Festus, who was listening to Paul's defense in front of King Agrippa, reacted harshly to Paul's remark about being sent to the Gentiles. He accused Paul of being a mad man driven insane from all of his learning. It's possible that Festus shouted this out to calm down the unbelieving Jews who were present at this inquest. Paul replied that he was speaking the truth, and since the events he had mentioned were not done in secret, he is confident that King Agrippa had heard about Jesus Christ and could confirm that what he was saying was true.

King Agrippa replied with a statement usually understood to mean that if Paul had continued to talk, he would have been compelled to become a Christian. A literal translation of the Greek would read something like this, "In a little you persuade me to be a Christian." A number of translations read something like this, "You almost persuaded me to become a Christian." The word *almost* leads one to assume that Paul almost convinced King Agrippa to be saved. The problem is that the word *almost* is not in the original Greek. If Paul had meant to show that King Agrippa almost believed then he most likely would have used a different Greek word (probably *shedon* G4975).

It seems plausible King Agrippa was actually telling Paul that in such a short time (or with so few words), you think you can persuade me to become a Christian. I believe that this statement (or question) actually fits in better with the tone of the events. Right after Festus loudly accused Paul of being mad, King Agrippa chimed in saying something like, "Do you think that you will be able to convince me to get saved in such a short time?" It seems logical that King Agrippa would not try to contradict Festus' assertion that Paul was a crazy person by admitting that the so-called mad man almost compelled him to get saved. Instead, it appears that King Agrippa was mocking Paul, surprised that Paul would actually think that he could persuade him to become saved in such a brief presentation. Also, since many of Paul's accusers were listening to what was going on, it would seem strange for King Agrippa to stir up the Jews by acknowledging that what Paul was saying sounded reasonable. He and Festus were doing all they could to give the Jews what they wanted in order to keep peace in the region.

Paul's response, looking at reliable Greek manuscripts, is also very telling. The Greek says something like this, "I wish that all who hear me in small or great were like me, except for these bonds." In other words, Paul is saying that whether in few or many words (or in short or long time), that those listening to him would become Christians. Although there are some who will never deviate from the idea that King Agrippa was "almost persuaded," it appears that that particular understanding does not seem to be supported in the Greek manuscripts.

After listening to Paul, the consensus of King Agrippa and Festus was that Paul had done nothing deserving of death. If he had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been let go. Some use this to show that Paul had made a mistake in appealing to Caesar. However, there are at least three benefits to Paul appealing his case to the emperor. The first is that he will be protected from the unbelieving Jews who would do anything to kill him. Second, Paul will receive an all-expenses paid trip to Rome (although a paid trip may have been much less exciting). Third, Paul was given the opportunity to speak to many people who were in high positions, something what would not normally be possible. I view the events happening in Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome as being all God driven, not mistakes that God used for His glory in spite of Paul.

### **On to Rome**

So far, it has been a very slow journey to Rome. Paul had to this point traveled 75 miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea, and had been stuck in Caesarea for over two years. If the rest of his trip moved at this same rate, he would arrive in Rome in about 40 years. Fortunately, the pace is quickening and it takes, it appears, just over six months to travel from Caesarea to Rome.

As Paul sails out of Caesarea he is accompanied by Luke, who is writing about their journey, and Aristarchus, a believer from Thessalonica. Aristarchus was with Paul in Ephesus when the people were all stirred up in defense of their god, Dianna (Acts 19:23–41). He remains a faithful helper of Paul throughout his ministry (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24).

They boarded a ship from Adramyttian, a city on the west coast of modern-day Turkey. Paul was being transported with some other prisoners. They sailed north from Caesarea to Sidon (about 80 miles). While in Sidon, the centurion in charge, Julius, allowed Paul to leave and visit with some friends. When they left Sidon, they headed west and passed between the island of Cyprus and modern-day Turkey. Because the winds were blowing contrary to them, they stayed close to the regions of Cilicia and Pamphylia and stopped in the city of Myra (now Demre, Turkey) along the western end of the southern coast of Turkey. They needed to find a ship that was traveling to Italy so they disembarked the Adramyttian ship and boarded an Alexandrian ship and continued their journey. Because of the contrary winds, it took many days for them to sail the approximately 150 miles from Myra to Cnidus (now Knidos, Turkey), a city on the southwest coast of Turkey. Because of the wind, they sailed southwest from Cnidus to Salmone on the east coast of the Crete, and with much difficulty continued on the south side of Crete to the city of Fair Havens (now Kaloi Limenes, Crete).

They had stayed in the city of Fair Havens for a good amount of time so that even the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) had passed, which can take place from mid-September to mid-October. You might recall that Paul was trying to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost just before he was arrested. Since Pentecost (Pesach) is about five months earlier than the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), approximately two and a half years have passed since he was in Jerusalem.

Ships are usually harbored during the winter months because of the brutal and unexpected storms which develop on the Mediterranean Sea. Fair Haven did not have a good harbor for them to overwinter, so they set out with the intention of traveling 60 or so miles west to the city of Phoenix (now Loutro) on Crete where they would be able to find a safe winter harbor.

Before setting sail, Paul warned them that it would not go so well. If they were to stay in Fair Havens they would be safe, but if they decided to continue their journey then they would experience injury and much damage. The centurion listened to the owner and operator of the ship and decided that they should continue on to Phoenix. The softly blowing south wind was confirmation that they should move on, but those conditions quickly deteriorated when they were hit with a great storm.

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