

Almost, Later, or Altogether

“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 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 26:27-29

That's Not For Me

A pastor was troubled by one of the Deacons in his church. This man was lazy and refused to live correctly. The pastor, hoping that the Word of God would bring about a change in the deacon, preached a sermon designed with him in mind. As the deacon left the church, he commented to the pastor, **“Pastor, you really told them today!”**

One Sunday only a few members showed up at church. As usual, the deacon was present. The pastor thought, **“I’ve really got him today!”** and proceeded to preach a message with the deacon in mind. As the deacon left, he said, **“Oh, pastor, you really told them today!”** The pastor couldn’t believe it.

Finally it happened. It rained so hard that no one showed up for church, except the deacon. The pastor was so excited. Today the deacon would know that the message was for him and he would hopefully respond accordingly. The pastor began preaching with great enthusiasm. He preached against all of the shortcomings of the deacon. As the deacon left the church that day, he said to the pastor, **“Oh, pastor! If they had been here, you would have really told them today.”** Many times people allow the preaching (of the gospel) to go over their heads and hit their neighbor instead. Our response is, **“This is for someone else. It is not for me!”**

Don't Call Me! I'll Call You!

“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” (Acts 24:25)

Felix neglected the truth that Paul had given him and procrastinated (put it off until a later time). He was shocked by the penetrating power of the gospel, but when he saw the price of the commitment, he put it off. He wanted Paul to go away and leave him alone. We call his response the **“don't call me, I will call you”** response. People like this neglect and put off a response until it is a more convenient time. That time never comes! Neglect can be fatal. Some say, **“I will not make a decision right now. I will decide later.”** Without realizing it they have actually made a decision.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...” (Hebrews 2:3)

Preach For An Immediate Response

We don't need to be afraid to preach the gospel and press people for a decision. Their salvation is extremely important. It is a matter of life or death.

“...Behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor 6:2)

Almost Persuaded Is Not Persuaded

Agrippa claimed to be **“almost”** persuaded. Some other words or phrases for **“almost”** are **“nearly, not quite, just about, on the edge of, close to.”** However, **“almost”** is not good enough.

We must be both **“almost and altogether”** (Acts 26:28-29) persuaded just like Paul. **“To almost become a Christian is to remain a sinner.”**

ALMOST

**To almost be clean is to be dirty.
 To almost believe is to doubt.
 To almost tell the truth is to lie.
 To almost win is to lose.
 To almost be right is to be wrong.
 To almost be straight is to be crooked.
 To almost be saved is to be lost.**

Just Let Me Keep My Traditions

Many people, when they hear the truth, decide to stay with their traditional religions and even defend them. (See Mark 7:3-9; 13) They remind us of the story in Jeremiah 36.

“Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid...” (Jeremiah 36:22-24)

Some people do basically the same thing. They cast away the portions of the Word of God that they want to neglect, or reject and fail to live according to what the Bible says. They don't even seem to be afraid of accepting part of the Word of God, while rejecting part. A much better response would be to become like Apollos (Acts 18) and the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19). These people acknowledged and obeyed the **further truth for serious seekers.**

Blinded

Others seem to not even comprehend what is being preached. Because of their being blinded, they never seem to understand or respond to the gospel. How can this be? Satan has blinded them.

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Those That Quickly Received the Gospel

The Book of Acts is full of examples of people who quickly, gladly, received the Word of God; believed it and responded in obedience.

Peter's First Sermon Brings Great Response

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37) (This is one of the important questions in Acts.)

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)

Even Religious Leaders Accept Truth

“...And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7)

Deacon Preaches; Samaria Responds

“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake...” (Acts 8:6)

Preaching the Gospel to a Congregation of One

“...The eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36)

Surprise... Gentiles Get Saved

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.” (Acts 10:44)

People Respond to Gospel Before Preachers Chased out of Town

“...And so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.” (Acts 14:1)

Salvation

Business Woman Has Open Heart

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple...which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened...” (Acts 16:14)

Jailer Has Earth Shaking Experience

“...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30) (Another of the important questions found in the Book of Acts. It is the most important question of all time.) See Acts 16:33.

People Respond to Gospel Before Preachers Chased Out of Town Again

“And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” (Acts 17:4)

Every Pastor's Dream Congregation

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11)

Even Believers Believe Again

“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”(Acts 19:5-6)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why did the deacon not receive the preaching of the pastor for himself?

2. Why should we preach for an immediate response? _____

3. What type of response did Felix give to the preaching of Paul? _____

4. What type of response did King Agrippa give to Paul? _____
5. Give three examples from Acts of people who received the Word of God. _____

6. What are the two most important questions asked in the Book of Acts? _____

7. How does Jeremiah 36:22-24 relate to people who prefer to keep their traditions rather than obey further truth? _____
