

Introduction

I appreciate the chance to bring this message to <http://omegamanradio.com> and thanks to our friend Rev. Joseph Cohen

- Eric and Noemi Ross
- The Master's Hand Christian Fellowship – <http://the-mastershand.org>
- Prayer Line – 712-432-6100 Code: 35051381 6:00-7:00 am Eastern Time
- <http://prayny.org>
- <http://mymarriageentors.org>
- <http://www.nationaldayofprayer.org/>
- Rev Joseph Cohen – <http://newhopeinthelord.com>

You Almost Persuade Me

Introduction – 6 min

Many people have heard the gospel. But not everyone receives it. My topic tonight is “the moment of decision”.

Our main text is Acts 26:23-30, Paul has had an opportunity to preach the gospel to the Jewish King Agrippa and Festus the Roman Governor and a crowd of others. We aren't going to read the full text here but after Paul gives his personal testimony of conversion, his life and ministry, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead,

King Agrippa responds in

(Act 26:28) Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Paul reply's but his reply is ignored because and from that moment on, the conversation changes.

Act 26:30 And when he had thus spoken, the king (Agrippa) rose up, and the governor (Festus), and Bernice (Agrippa's sister), and they that sat with them:

Act 26:31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

Let me give you a short example here. When my daughter was about four years old, I came home from work one day and sat down in my easy chair. It had been one of those “All-in” days and I was exhausted. As I sat there in staring at the wall, she jumped up in my lap, grabbed my chin, and said “daddy, pay attention to me”. Well, you know I did.

I share that to make this point,

The Propositional Statement

There are moments in time when people are open to hearing, and actually listening. It is just after this moment that they will make a decision to believe or reject the gospel.

As Christians, we need to

“Recognize, and take advantage of that moment.”

The Transitional Sentence

Well, let’s go back to Paul and his message to Agrippa and Festus.

This Opportunity to Share the Gospel Didn’t Just Happen

Main Body – 48 min

First Point – 12 min

Paul’s time before these leaders began long before this when he set himself to go to Jerusalem.

And when we set ourselves on a path, even when it takes some time to be fulfilled, we need to:

“Recognize, and take advantage of that moment.”

when it comes.

In Acts 20 Paul is returning from his missionary journeys and gathers the church leaders at Ephesus in Acts 20:17-24 (summarize below):

Act 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

Act 20:18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

Act 20:19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

Act 20:20 *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

Act 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Act 20:22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Act 20:23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Act 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

When they gathered he recounted the work and ministry, including the threats that had come to him from the Jews.

Then in Acts 20: 23, he says "the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me".

At any point, Paul could have chosen another path. He could have gone a different direction but he knew this was where the Lord was directing him. And then in Acts 20:24 he says "none of these things move me ... that I might finish ... the ministry, ... to testify the gospel of the grace of God".

Clearly his mission was to the gentiles so why did he go back to Jerusalem?

Well, let's backup a few chapters to Acts 18 to understand what brought Paul to this point in Ephesus.

In Acts 18 Claudius Caesar had exiled all of the Jews from Rome.

Act 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

Act 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

Now I am not looking to compare Claudius, Rome's head with our President Donald Trump, but immigration has been an issue for many leaders to deal with. And commentators say that: "This decree, which was made, not by the senate, but by the emperor himself continued only in force during his life." It seems that use of an "Executive Order" didn't begin with Trump.

There are often good reasons for this kind of action and Barnes and other commentators say "He expelled the Jews from Rome, as they were making continual insurrections, under their leader Chrestus."

Clearly Paul was affected by this relationship with Aquilla and Priscilla and in

Act 19:20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

And, even though it isn't directly stated, Paul had also been affected by the news from Rome. Because in Acts 19:20 he says:

Act 19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

We see Paul continuing his missionary journey preaching the gospel and seeing great results. But, there is a tug for him to return to Jerusalem and then to go on to Rome. It is later, as he heads toward Jerusalem, that he is warned of trouble as we read earlier in Acts 20:23.

And now we come back to our main point, we are talking about the events, the decisions, the leadings, that brought Paul to the place where he could present the gospel to the heads of state for Israel and later Rome.

1. Paul was obediently following his commission, preaching the gospel to the gentiles.
2. Paul was listening to, and learning about the political climate from Aquila as we read in Acts 18:2.
3. Paul was seeking God's direction and had "purposed in the spirit" to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome as we read in Acts 19:21.

It is only as he acts on this direction that the Holy Spirit confirms the leading and prepares him for trouble ahead as we read in Acts 20:22-23.

All of this brought Paul to Jerusalem. And this is where accusations are made, his life is threatened, and he is taken into protective custody. For more than two years, he is held in chains by the Roman Governor before Paul has his opportunity to “testify the gospel of the grace of God”

Here is our challenge, God has put things in our heart to do, and we don’t know exactly how they will be accomplished. If you were put in jail, would you have the will and trust in God that this was to get you before people that may not be reached any other way?

How far are you willing to go to **Create an Opportunity to Share the Gospel?**

Let’s go on to another main point.

The Invisible Things of Him ... are Clearly Seen

Second Point – 12 min

God has been showing himself to the world so we need to:

“Recognize, and take advantage of that moment.”

when a person is making a decision for, or against God.

Paul’s gospel message was being delivered to King Agrippa and Roman Governor Festus on that one day, in front of the whole court, but this wasn’t the first time they had heard about Jesus Christ. Note that in our main text, Paul says to Agrippa,

Act 26:26 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.

Act 26:27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

This isn’t the same Agrippa found earlier in Acts, but it is his son who also has knowledge of the things that happened with Christ, with his disciples, and with the early Church. So, in addition to the personal knowledge he had by living through this same time period, we find in:

Rom 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

People often say that they don't know about God. But this isn't the case. God can be seen in creation. And once the wonder and beauty of creation is seen, we choose whether we will acknowledge God or not. This choice doesn't require any instruction or a preacher to explain. Every person will make their own choice here.

Let me give you a personal illustration. I went to a summer camp in the Colorado Rocky Mountains when I was thirteen years old. That summer we hiked and climbed Longs Peak, one of the highest of the front range peaks. It was such an awesome view, in all directions. The plains East, more mountains North, South, and West. There were snow covered peaks, Pine trees below, valleys with streams running to lakes, the great plains stretching out as far as I could see, and the beautiful clear blue Colorado sky. That day changed me forever as I was taken in by God's great creation.

Once people have known God through his creation and rejected Him, they have a predisposition against the knowledge of God that isn't easily broken. As it says in Rom 1:21 "their foolish heart was darkened".

Now let's go back to our main text for a minute and look at the way the Roman Governor Festus responded to Paul.

Act 26:24 And as he (Paul) thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

Act 26:25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

There are those that will deny the truth that is clearly seen right in front of them.

Let's take another main point.

People Come When God Draws Them

Third Point – 12 min

When you find yourself in a conversation about God, whether with one person or a large group,

“Recognize, and take advantage of that moment.”

Because God has prepared you, and them, for that moment.

Jesus said in

Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

And when God draws them, He will send someone to preach the gospel of the Kingdom to them. They will be taught about the sacrificial blood of Christ through his crucifixion and death, and his resurrection and now position in heaven with the Father.

Though they didn't know it, God was drawing Festus and Agrippa together for this moment and Agrippa asked for it. In

Act 25:22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

Act 25:23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

The best illustration I can think of here is Peter and Cornelius. Peter was a Christian, a disciple, but also a Jew. Even though Jesus had told the disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel in Mark 16:14-18, they were still, in many ways, living under the law.

Anyway, Cornelius was seeking God, and God reached out to Cornelius as we see in

Act 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,

Act 10:2 A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Act 10:3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

Act 10:4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Act 10:5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:

Act 10:6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

The angel told Cornelius that Peter would tell him what to do. Now we might think that the angel would just tell Cornelius what to do, but that isn't their job. It is our job to preach the gospel.

Next, God must deal with Peter to prepare him to go to Cornelius.

Act 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

Act 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

Act 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

Act 10:15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

Act 10:16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Act 10:17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

Act 10:18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

Act 10:19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

Act 10:20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

I am always amazed when I read vs 15 "What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common" because even Peter, a strong leader in the Church, needed an adjustment. None of us have it all, but God is teaching us!

When Peter arrives in Caesarea at Cornelius's house he finds a crowd of people.

Act 10:27 And as he (Peter) talked with him (Cornelius) , he went in, and found many that were come together.

Then

Act 10:28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Peter must get over the boundary of his religion to bring them the gospel.

Let me add a personal experience. When my wife Noemi gives her testimony, she always says "when God called me, I came" Before we met, she was going through a really difficult time one Saturday morning she thought she needed to go to that Church with the white cross. This was a Church she had driven past many times. She called her sister and mentioned the Church. Her sister said she and her niece had just gone there and this Saturday was Women's Ministry. They jumped in the car and went and God met her there. As she now says, God called her and she came.

People can get this gospel message by reading God's Word, the Bible. They can get it by hearing a media message. And, they can get it by the words of your mouth. God is drawing people, and they will have questions. It is up to us to share the message of Christ.

One final point.

Let the Holy Spirit Fall

Fourth Point – 12 min

Once you begin preaching the gospel,

“Recognize, and take advantage of that moment.”

because the Holy Spirit is just waiting for that moment when a person will agree, and accept Christ.

There is a work of redemption that occurs when we come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As it says in

Eph 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Or, there is a rejection of Christ and a turning away as it says in

Isa 63:10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.

We all have schedules and plan our time and often want to move on to the next thing. During these times of sharing the gospel, where real ministry is taking place, we need to preserve the moment. Stay with it until the Holy Spirit has finished his work.

In our Church, we always have coffee and fellowship after our Sunday morning service. And this means there is some cleanup work to do after everyone is done. But sometimes, the Lord is doing a work in someone's life and we preserve the moment. This then disrupts the schedule for those doing the cleanup work. But we are all in the work of the ministry together. Let the Holy Spirit move.

The Sermon Conclusion

Conclusion – 6 min

Our main text begins with the gospel of Jesus Christ:

Act 26:23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

This is why Paul was here. This is why Paul had subjected himself to chains for these two years. And Paul was doing all he could to bring them to a place of accepting Christ.

Sadly, Festus reacted,

Act 26:24 And as he (Paul) thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

Act 26:25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Then Paul reached out to Agrippa saying

Act 26:26 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.

Act 26:27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Agrippa then responded with the title of our message:

Act 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Paul makes one final plea:

Act 26:29 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.

Then the moment was gone:

Act 26:30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

Now let me briefly re-state the main points:

1. This Opportunity to Share the Gospel Didn't Just Happen
2. The Invisible Things of Him ... are Clearly Seen
3. People Come When God Draws Them
4. Let the Holy Spirit Fall

The message is to be looking to, be planning to, be working to:

"Recognize, and take advantage of that moment."

and when it comes, make the most of it. Keep their attention, because once they move, the moment is over.

Pray: If you have been listening and have never accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, simply say this prayer with me.

"Dear God,
I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness.
I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life.
I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will.
I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

If you prayed with me, I want to seal that with a short prayer for you.

"Father,
I thank you for these that have accepted Christ today. Lead them by your Holy Spirit to a local Church where they can learn more about you and your plan for their life, In Jesus name, Amen

Pray: For those of you that are Christians, we have a commission to preach this gospel of the kingdom. Go and read Paul's message. Make it your own. And, pray with me now.

"Father,
I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ.
Father, I know it is your desire that all would be saved and come to know
the truth.
I commit myself to this work of ministry and ask you to order my steps
and prepare people by drawing them in.
Prepare moments when I can share the work and love of Jesus Christ with
others.
I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

For those of you that prayed with me, would you please go to prayny.org and add a
prayer request so that we can connect with you and continue to pray for the fulfillment
of God's plan in your life.

"Preparation time is never wasted time." Dr. Kenneth E. Hagin

"Success is always the result of following the leading of the Holy Spirit." Dr. Kenneth E. Hagin

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