SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
26:19

DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Twenty-Six, Verses 1–32

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision — a prisoner in chains tells a king how the risen Jesus stopped him on the road and sent him to open blind eyes

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

In the great hall at Caesarea Paul tells his story for the last time in Acts: a zealous Pharisee who hunted Christians, a light brighter than the sun, a voice that said "I am Jesus," and a commission to turn men from darkness to light. Festus calls him mad; Agrippa says, "In a short time you will persuade me." Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 26:1–32

hope · the road · the commission · almost

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements through Paul's defense before King Agrippa

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"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision." — Acts 26:19

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 26:1–32

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision — Paul's defense before Agrippa — the hope of Israel, the light on the road, and a king almost persuaded

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 26 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 26:18

"to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'"

† Before the Passage

Acts 25 ended with Festus in a bind: he had a prisoner to send to the emperor and "nothing definite" to write about him (25:26). So he brought Paul before King Agrippa II, who knew Jewish law and customs, in a hall full of commanders and city leaders. Chapter 26 is Paul's answer — the longest of his defense speeches in Acts and the last time he tells the story of his conversion. Agrippa simply says, "You are permitted to speak for yourself" (v. 1).

This is the third telling. Luke narrates the Damascus road himself in Acts 9; Paul tells it to the Jerusalem crowd in Hebrew in Acts 22; and here he tells it to a king. Each telling fits its hearers. Before Agrippa Paul leaves out Ananias and the blindness, adds the proverb about the goads, and gives Jesus' commission in Jesus' own words (vv. 16–18). It is the fullest statement in Acts of what Christ sent Paul to do.

Paul builds his defense on Israel's hope. He is on trial, he says, "for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain" (vv. 6–7) — the hope of resurrection and of the Messiah's kingdom. Paul does not present the gospel as a break with Israel but as the fulfillment of "what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place" (v. 22): a suffering Christ, raised first from the dead, bringing light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles (v. 23; Isaiah 42:6–7; 49:6).

Three men answer him. Festus, the Roman, thinks Paul has lost his mind. Agrippa, the Jewish king who believes the prophets, is moved but will not commit. And Paul, in chains, wishes they were all just like him — "except for these chains" (v. 29). The hearing ends with a private verdict that should have freed him: "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (v. 32).

FIGURE · ONE ROAD, THREE TELLINGS

ONE ROAD, THREE TELLINGS · ACTS 9 · 22 · 26

	ACTS 9	ACTS 22	ACTS 26
TOLD BY	Luke, narrating	Paul, to the temple crowd	Paul, to King Agrippa
LANGUAGE	—	Hebrew dialect (21:40)	Jesus spoke Hebrew (26:14)
THE LIGHT	"a light from heaven" (9:3)	"a very bright light" (22:6)	"brighter than the sun" (26:13)
ANANIAS	sent; eyes healed (9:17–18)	"a man who was devout" (22:12)	not mentioned
ONLY HERE	the word to Ananias (9:15)	"the Righteous One" (22:14)	goads; full commission (26:14–18)

The same event each time; Paul tells it to fit his hearers, and saves the fullest commission for a king.

Compare the columns: Acts 26 drops Ananias and the blindness, brightens the light, and alone gives the goads and Jesus' full commission.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 26:1–8

The Hope of the Promise

A Pharisee's life, Israel's hope, and the question of resurrection

[1] *Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense:* [2] *"In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today;* [3] *especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.* [4] *"So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem;* [5] *since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.* [6] *"And now I am standing trial for the hope of the*

> *promise made by God to our fathers*; [7] *the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.* [8] *"Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?*
>
> ACTS 26:1–8

> *"having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."*
>
> ACTS 24:15

> *"circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 3:5–6

ἐλπίς

ELPIS · "HOPE" · G1680

Not wishful thinking but confident expectation of what God has promised. Paul uses the noun twice and the verb (*elpizō*, G1679) once in two verses: "the hope of the promise … to which our twelve tribes hope to attain … for this hope, O King, I am being accused" (vv. 6–7). The irony is sharp: he is accused by Jews for holding the hope of the Jews. Paul still speaks of "our twelve tribes" — the promise belongs to Israel, and he expects God to keep it.

ἄπιστος

APISTOS · "INCREDIBLE" · G571

"Unbelievable, not to be trusted" — the same word the New Testament uses for an unbeliever. "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?" (v. 8). The "you" is plural: Paul turns from the king to the whole hall. The question is not whether a dead man can rise by himself but whether *God* can raise him. Henry: "There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible that God should raise the dead."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes Paul's courtesy to Agrippa, "an expert" in Jewish customs, and the shape of his defense: "Paul made it clear that in both his heart and mind, he remained a faithful Jew." His faith in Jesus did not replace Israel's hope; it grew out of it: "His trust in Jesus was an outgrowth of his trust in the hope of the promise made by God." That hope centered on resurrection, which Agrippa, who knew the Scriptures, should not have found strange. Guzik presses Paul's question on every hearer: "Why should it be thought incredible that God can do anything?"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry dwells on Paul's former life. He was a strict Pharisee in practice, not only in name: "He was not only called a Pharisee, but he lived a Pharisee." "All that knew him knew very well that never any Pharisee conformed more punctually to the rules of his order than he did." What changed was not his hope but its fulfillment; the promise to the fathers is still the center of his faith — "His religion consists in the hopes of this promise." And Henry answers Paul's question for him: "There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible that God should raise the dead."

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 26:9–15

Saul, Saul

A furious persecutor, a light at midday, and the voice that said "I am Jesus"

9 *"So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things* ⚠ *hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*. 10 *"And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.* 11 *"And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and* ⚠ *being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.* 12 *"While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,* 13 *at midday, O King, I saw on the way* △ *a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.* 14 *"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, '*△ *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?* ⚠ *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'* 15 *"And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, '*△ *I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*

ACTS 26:9–15

"even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;"

1 TIMOTHY 1:13

ἐμμαίνομαι

EMMAINOMAI · "FURIOUSLY ENRAGED" · G1693

Verse 11: "being furiously enraged at them" — literally "raging madly against them," the only New Testament use, with the intensifier *perissōs*, "exceedingly" (KJV: "exceedingly mad"). It is built on the same verb Festus will throw at Paul in verse 24: *mainomai*, "you are out of your mind." Luke lets the reader see who was really mad. The old Saul raged against Christ; the new Paul speaks "words of sober truth" (v. 25). Henry: "Persecutors are mad men, and some of them exceedingly mad."

κέντρον

KENTRON · "GOAD" · G2759

A pointed stick for driving oxen; an ox that kicks back only drives the point into itself. "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (v. 14) was a proverb known in Greek literature, and in the best manuscripts it appears only here in the three tellings (the KJV also has it at 9:5). The same word is death's "sting" in 1 Corinthians 15:55–56. Jesus' point is tender: resisting Him is hurting you. Spurgeon notes the rebuke focuses on Saul's harm, not Christ's offense.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik is frank about the old Saul: "Before his conversion, Paul was an angry man." He imprisoned, voted against and tried to force believers to blaspheme, and "His great rage showed that his relationship with God was not right, despite his diligent religious observance." Guzik wonders whether the forced blasphemy haunted him most. Then the light: "Paul literally saw the light before he figuratively saw the light." The goads remind us that fighting Jesus is futile, and Paul's repentance was from misguided zeal, not immorality. At "I am Jesus," "He immediately understood that Jesus was alive, not dead."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Kicking Against the Pricks" (No. 709, 9 Sept 1866, on the same words in Acts 9:5) begins with the tenderness of the rebuke. Saul is the ox — but a valuable one, bought at a price: "I have paid for thee too dearly to let thee be lost." The goads are God's gentle pressures: "Every doctrine, and every part of the teachings of God's Word, acts like a goad to unconverted men." "The ox when wounded is so very foolish as to dash its foot against the goad." And Christ's view is merciful: "The Saviour looks at sin through the glass of compassion; we often look upon it through the lens of Pharisaic pride."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls Saul's zeal what it was: "Persecutors are mad men, and some of them exceedingly mad." On the road the light and the voice came, and the proud Pharisee was brought down: "Paul's spirit at first perhaps began to rise, but he is told it is at his peril, and then he yields." The furious man of verse 11 is on the ground, asking, "Who are You, Lord?"

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 26:16–18

From Darkness to Light

Get up — a minister and a witness, sent to open eyes

16 *'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;*
17 *rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,* 18 *to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'*

ACTS 26:16–18

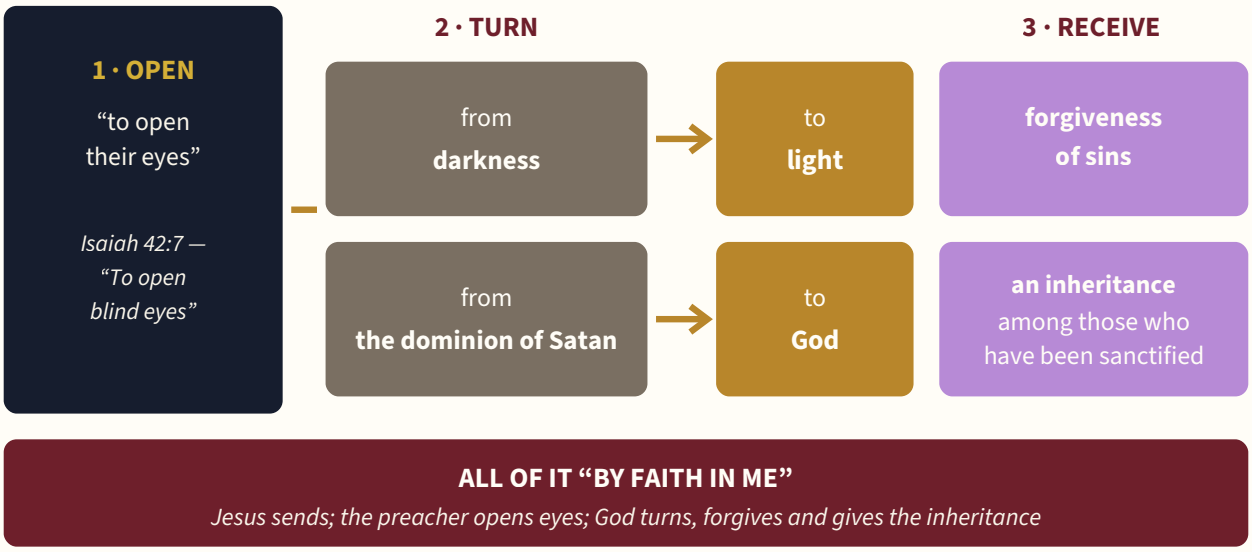
"I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison."

ISAIAH 42:6–7

"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,"

COLOSSIANS 1:13

FIGURE · THE COMMISSION OF 26:18



Read left to right: eyes opened, a man turned from darkness and Satan to light and God, and then forgiveness and an inheritance — all by faith in Christ.

Ὑπηρέτης καὶ μάρτυς

HYPĒRETĒS KAI MARTYS · "MINISTER AND WITNESS" · G5257, G3144

Hypēretēs is an under-servant, an attendant who carries out orders (Luke uses it of "servants of the word," Luke 1:2). *Martys* is a witness who tells what he has seen — the word that later came to mean "martyr." Paul is appointed to both: to serve the message and to testify to "the things which you have seen" and "the things in which I will appear to you" (v. 16). Guzik: "he is called to serve the message."

ἐξουσία

EXOUSIA · "DOMINION" · G1849

Authority, ruling power (KJV "power"). The unconverted are not merely ignorant; they live under a ruler — "the dominion of Satan" — and must be turned "to God" (v. 18). Colossians 1:13 uses the same word: "He rescued us from the domain (*exousia*) of darkness." The verse ends with a perfect participle, *hēgiasmenois* (G37): "those who have been sanctified" — set apart once and for all, "by faith in Me."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Jesus did not leave Paul on the ground: the commission came with the conversion. Paul was to be a minister and a witness, and Guzik draws the principle: "The commission of the Christian is not to make the message or his testimony serve him; he is called to serve the message." There is a beautiful irony in it — "His eyes were not yet opened physically, but Jesus sent him to open the eyes of others." The work is to turn Jews and Gentiles from darkness to light and from Satan's power to God, so they receive forgiveness and a place among the sanctified.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads verse 18 as a summary of the whole work of grace. Paul "is sent to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light" — the first work is to open the eyes. But it is more than education: "converting grace turns them from under the dominion of Satan, and brings them into subjection to God." Then come the gifts, forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among the sanctified, and Henry stresses the channel: all of it is "by faith" in Christ.

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 26:19–23

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision

Repent, turn, and prove it — nothing but what Moses and the Prophets said

19 *"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,* 20 *but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.* 21 *"For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.* 22 *"So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place;* 23 *that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."*

ACTS 26:19–23

"and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

LUKE 24:46–47

"He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.""

ISAIAH 49:6

ὀπτασία

OPTASIA · "VISION" · G3701

A sight, an appearing — four New Testament uses (Luke 1:22; 24:23; Acts 26:19; 2 Corinthians 12:1). Paul calls it "the heavenly vision": not a dream he worked up but the risen Christ appearing to him from heaven. "I did not prove disobedient" is a deliberate understatement (litotes) — he means, "I obeyed at once and kept obeying." His whole career from Damascus to this hall is the proof (v. 20).

μετανοέω
METANOEŌ · "REPENT" · G3340

A change of mind that turns a man around. Paul preached three things in a row (v. 20): "repent," "turn to God," and perform "deeds appropriate to repentance" (*axia … erga*, G514, G2041 — works worthy of, matching, repentance). The order matters: the works do not produce the turning; they show it. John the Baptist had preached the same (Luke 3:8). Sproul: "Paul's not here articulating a doctrine of justification by works."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls Paul's obedience the only sane response: "No one should disobey the God who revealed Himself so powerfully." Paul preached what he had received — to Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea and the Gentiles — calling for repentance, turning to God and works fitting repentance. "Paul plainly states the truth of the case": the Jews seized him because he took the gospel to the Gentiles, not because he profaned the temple. His message was rooted in Moses and the prophets. And Guzik notes his priorities: "He was more interested in telling people about Jesus than in his personal freedom."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Almost Persuaded" (on Acts 26:19–32) begins with Paul's claim that he obeyed the vision, then pauses over verse 20 to guard the gospel. Repentance and works fitting it do not earn God's favor: "Paul's not here articulating a doctrine of justification by works." "Paul understood that our works do nothing to make us right in the sight of God." "No one was ever a more clear advocate of justification by faith alone." But the same Paul insisted that real faith shows itself in a changed life — the fruit follows the root.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry makes the vision a rule for every Christian: "Heavenly visions have a commanding power over earthly counsels, and it is at our peril if we be disobedient to them." He also presses the practical side of Paul's preaching: "It is not enough to speak penitent words, but we must do works agreeable to those words." Paul's message was not new doctrine but the old Scriptures fulfilled — a suffering Christ, the first to rise, showing light to Israel and the nations.

V
MOVEMENT

ACTS 26:24–32

Almost Persuaded

"You are out of your mind" — "not done in a corner" — "except for these chains"

24 *While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad."* 25 *But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.* 26 *"For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.* 27 *"King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do."* 28 *Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."* 29 *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."*
30 *The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,* 31 *and when they had*

> *gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." 32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."*
>
> ACTS 26:24–32

> *"but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."*
>
> 1 PETER 4:16

FIGURE · FOUR RESPONSES IN ONE HALL

FOUR RESPONSES IN ONE HALL · ACTS 26:24–32

FESTUS the Roman	AGRIPPA the king who knows	THE COURT aside, privately	PAUL the prisoner
"Paul, you are out of your mind!" (v24)	"In a short time you will persuade me" (v28)	"not … worthy of death or imprisonment" (v31)	"such as I am, except for these chains" (v29)

MAD · ALMOST · INNOCENT · ALTOGETHER

Spurgeon: Paul "almost persuaded him to be a Christian altogether" — but almost is not enough.

The same speech, four answers: the skeptic, the almost-believer, the private verdict, and the free man in chains.

μαίνομαι · σωφροσύνη

MAINOMAI · SŌPHROSYNĒ · "MAD" · "SOBER" · G3105, G4997

Festus: "*Mainē*, Paul" — "you are raving" (v. 24). Paul: "I am not *mainomai* … but I utter words of truth and *sōphrosynē*" (v. 25) — soundness of mind, self-control, good sense. Festus hears the resurrection and assumes too many books have unhinged the man ("your great learning," literally "many letters"). Paul answers that the facts are public: "this has not been done in a corner" (*gōnia*, G1137). Christianity rests on events, not secrets.

ἐν ὀλίγῳ … Χριστιανόν

EN OLIGŌ … CHRISTIANON · "IN A SHORT TIME … A CHRISTIAN" · G3641, G5546

En oligō is literally "in a little" — "in a little time" (NASB) or "with a little [effort]" or "almost" (KJV). Paul's reply plays on it: "whether in a short or long time" (KJV: "almost, and altogether"). Agrippa may be brushing Paul off with irony — "Do you think you can make me a Christian so quickly?" — or admitting he is close; either way he does not come. *Christianos* occurs only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), each time as outsiders use it.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik admits Paul could look mad — "Paul was obviously an intelligent man, a man of much learning" — and that "The gospel, when properly proclaimed and lived, will make some people think we are crazy." But "Paul's message was characterized by truth and reason, because it was based on historical events." As for Agrippa: "However close Agrippa was to becoming a believer, it wasn't close enough." With Spurgeon he wonders what held the king back — Bernice, Festus's opinion, the cost of chains. "Paul's direct challenge was too much for Agrippa, Festus, and the others on the platform," and they agreed he was innocent; "once an appeal was made, it could not be retracted."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul enjoys Festus's outburst — "They say there's a thin line between genius and insanity, and I think you've skated over the line, Paul." But Paul's answer is the heart of the sermon: the gospel is public truth. "Christianity did not begin as a mystery religion." "The manifestation of the Son of God was a public matter." "If your faith is private, it's not Christian faith you're talking about." Agrippa's reply is "The most tragic words Agrippa ever uttered in his life" — "I'm almost persuaded, but not quite." Sproul closes: "I would that you were almost and all together, such as Paul was, a man on fire for his vision of Christ."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "To Those Who Are 'Almost Persuaded'" (No. 871, 16 May 1869) notes that "the apostle never persuaded Agrippa to be almost a Christian; but he almost persuaded him to be a Christian altogether." He names what holds men back — bad company, fear of scorn, the cost — and above all this: "The reason why sinners are not persuaded is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, their sin — their love of sin!" "It is not a flaw in the preacher's logic; it is a flaw in the hearer's nature." The danger is real: "You cannot have the blessing by being almost persuaded to have it."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry hears Festus — "thou talkest like a madman" — and Paul's calm reply, and he agrees the facts were public: "This thing was not done in a corner; all the country rang of it." Of Agrippa: "Note, Many are almost persuaded to be religious who are not quite persuaded." Paul's wish moves him — "Nothing could be said more tenderly nor with a better grace," "for he excepts these bonds." The court "all concurred in an opinion of Paul's innocency," yet "Agrippa, who was but almost persuaded to be a Christian, proves no better than if he had not been at all persuaded."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The Servant's light, a chosen instrument, and the light of the knowledge of God

> *"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."*
>
> PSALM 16:10

> *“But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;”*
>
> ACTS 9:15

> *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20

> *“in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4

> *“For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6

> *“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”*
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 1:15

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In “Jesus Affirmed To Be Alive” (on 25:19), Spurgeon gives the reason Paul could say Christ would be “the first” to rise (26:23): “Jesus is the pattern, the proof, the pledge, the earnest, the guarantee of the resurrection of all the rest.”

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one speech. Guzik follows the defense and its logic; Sproul (sourced for vv19–32 only) guards justification by faith and insists the gospel is public truth; Spurgeon pleads with the ox and with the almost-persuaded; Henry draws a rule from every line. They read Agrippa's "in a short time" a little differently, but all agree: almost is not enough.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Israel's hope	Still a faithful Jew; faith in Jesus grew out of the promise.	— (Sproul's sermon on vv1–18 is audio only; not quoted)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	He lived a Pharisee; nothing incredible in God raising the dead.
II · The persecutor stopped	An angry man; saw the light before he saw the light.	— (not sourced)	The valuable ox, bought dearly; every doctrine a goad.	Persecutors are mad men; his spirit rose, then he yielded.
III · The commission	Serve the message; blind himself, sent to open eyes.	— (not sourced)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Eyes opened first; grace turns from Satan's dominion to God.
IV · The heavenly vision	No one should disobey such a God; Jesus over freedom.	Repentance is not justification by works — faith alone, then fruit.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Heavenly visions command earthly counsels; works, not just words.
V · Almost persuaded	Crazy to some, but truth and reason; close is not close enough.	Not a mystery religion; "almost, but not quite" — tragic words.	Almost a Christian altogether; the flaw is in the hearer's nature.	Not done in a corner; almost proves no better than not at all.

ACTS 26:1–32 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Accused by Jews for the hope of the Jews.** Paul is on trial "for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" (v6), the hope "our twelve tribes" still await (v7). Guzik: his trust in Jesus "was an outgrowth" of that hope. GUZIK
- **Not "can a man rise?" but "can God raise him?"** "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?" (v8). Henry: "There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible." HENRY
- **Who was really mad?** Saul was "furiously enraged" (*emmainomai*, v11); Festus says Paul is "out of your mind" (*mainomai*, v24). The persecutor raged; the apostle speaks sober truth. THE GREEK
- **The goad hurts the one who kicks.** Spurgeon: "The ox when wounded is so very foolish as to dash its foot against the goad." Resisting Christ wounds only you. SPURGEON
- **To persecute the church is to persecute Christ.** "Why are you persecuting Me? … I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (vv14–15). Guzik: he "immediately understood that Jesus was alive." THE TEXT
- **A blind man sent to open eyes.** Guzik: "His eyes were not yet opened physically, but Jesus sent him to open the eyes of others." The commission echoes the Servant of Isaiah 42:7. GUZIK
- **The whole gospel in one verse.** Open, turn, receive (v18): from darkness to light, from Satan's dominion to God, forgiveness and an inheritance — "by faith in Me." THE TEXT

- **Works show repentance; they do not buy it.** Sproul: "Paul understood that our works do nothing to make us right in the sight of God." Henry: "It is not enough to speak penitent words." SPROUL
- **Not done in a corner.** Sproul: "If your faith is private, it's not Christian faith you're talking about." The gospel rests on public events. SPROUL
- **Almost is not enough.** Spurgeon: Paul "almost persuaded him to be a Christian altogether." Henry: almost "proves no better than if he had not been at all persuaded." SPURGEON

† Questions for the Table

1 **Before Christ, Saul was sincere, religious — and furious. Where has my religion or my zeal made me angry and hard rather than loving?**

His great rage showed his relationship with God was not right (Guzik).

26:9–11; 1 Tim 1:13

2 **What "goads" has God used on me — people, consequences, His Word — and where am I still kicking?**

The goad hurts the one who kicks (Spurgeon).

26:14

3 **Jesus said, "Get up and stand on your feet" — and gave Paul a job. What has He given me to do with my story?**

Serve the message, don't make it serve you (Guzik).

26:16–18

4 **Which part of verse 18 do I most need to remember about my own life: eyes opened, turned to God, forgiven, or given an inheritance?**

All of it "by faith in Me."

26:18; Col 1:13

5 **What "deeds appropriate to repentance" would show the people around me that I have really turned?**

Not penitent words only, but works agreeable to them (Henry).

26:20; Luke 3:8

6 **Agrippa was close and stayed put. Is there any part of my life where I am "almost" — and what is holding me back?**

The flaw is in the hearer's nature, not the preacher's logic (Spurgeon).

26:27–29

Acts 26 is a prisoner's testimony to a king. Paul tells who he was, what he saw, and what Jesus sent him to do, and he ends with a wish no chain could stop: that everyone listening would become what he is. Festus called it madness; Agrippa called it almost. The risen Jesus still calls men from darkness to light — and almost is not enough.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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