



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



Almost? Or Altogether?

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

Acts 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.

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Agrippa was a—when you read some things about Agrippa, we know he was a very influential man. We know that he had a lot of power. We know he was a career politician. We know that he came from a family that were politicians. If you read back in the book of Acts, do you know what you will find out? His dad was the one who was eaten by worms one day. Paul has been arrested, in Jerusalem. We know they drummed up all kinds of false charges against him. They wanted to kill Him. They switched him around in different places and hid him to keep him alive. However, all along God had a plan. All along God had a plan for Paul. Paul did not understand every detail of everything that was going to happen.

God has a plan for you and me and I do not understand everything that is going to happen. I do know one thing. I do know that God promised me that if I follow Him, He would take me to heaven. He promised you the same thing. He promised us all that. If we would just simply follow Him, live by faith, and He would take us to heaven one day when life came to an end.

Paul knew that. Paul knew that. Paul also knew something else. Saul met the God of heaven, one day, on the road. Saul had murder in his heart. He was a very zealous guy. He lived the strictest life that you could live as far as the law was. He was a Pharisee. He spoke many languages. He was a very well-educated guy. However, he was leaving one day to go down to Damascus. He was going down there to bring a bunch of people and arrest some people down there and no doubt condemn some people. We know that he stood at some people's feet or they laid their coat at his feet when they stoned some people. We know that no doubt, Saul consented unto many people's death. He wanted to stamp out or kill this way called the “Jesus Way,” or the ones that were following the Nazarene; those that he thought that were teaching. He thought they were a sect. He thought they were trying to destroy the Law of Moses.

As he was going down the road one day, again, with murder in his heart.

I thought about this today. How great God really is and how wonderful the grace of Almighty God really is and how far it goes.

Here is a guy going down the road with murder in his heart. He was going down to Damascus to murder people, to arrest people, to bring them back to Jerusalem. However, do you know what happened? Suddenly, the God of heaven appeared to

him. Do you remember that? Do you remember the great light came? They fell to the ground. Everybody is trembling. Do you know what? Paul hears a voice. Do you remember? Paul hears a voice.

Listen. God still yet speaks to people. Amen! He spoke to Paul and He spoke to David. He spoke to Moses. He will speak to me. He will speak to you. God still speaks to people.

He spoke to him. "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?" Why are you persecuting me? You see, Saul did not understand that what he was doing, even though he thought he was worshiping God. He thought he was doing what God really wanted him to do and stamp out and get rid of these people that call themselves Christians. Paul thought he was doing right. He did not understand that he was actually persecuting the God of heaven. He was persecuting God's people. When we persecute God's people, we are persecuting the God of heaven. Amen! Because we belong to Him. He is our God. We are part of His family. Anyway, we know the story. Paul was blind. The guys that were with him; they hear the voice. They see what is going on. They hear things. They see the light but they do not understand what is happening here, what Paul heard and so forth.

But we know that he tells him, going down the road; you are going down in town. You stay down there and everything is going to be fine. We know that he did. We know the story. I do not have time to get into all of that. We know that our brother goes down and speaks to Saul. We know that Saul gets saved. The scales fall from his eyes. He begins to preach. That is the story. In a short version.

This is several years after that. I do not know how many years it is. However, he is on his way to Rome. He is on his way to Rome because God; the Lord Jesus had told him, "Paul, you are going to go to Rome... You went all these different places, but I am going to take you to Rome and you are going to be there." Again, Paul did not understand the journey to get from Jerusalem to Rome. He did not understand all the things...

I thought about this today. Paul had no idea that when Jesus told him he was going to take him to Rome; he had no idea what was going to take place. He had no idea that he was going to be shipwrecked. He had no idea he was going to be floating around out in the ocean, on the broken parts of the ship. He had no idea of that. He did not have any idea that they were going to go into a certain place. They were going to build a fire. The snake was going to come out of the fire and he was going to get snake bit. He had no idea of that. Did he? He did not know that.

However, God had a plan. Do you know what God has for us? God has a plan for us. God has a plan for us.

Here is the thing. We are either almost, or altogether. Get that. The word *almost* means this: nearly. You can look this up in your Webster's Dictionary. It means, only a little bit less than, just short of, just short of totally, pretty near, or very close; that is what

the word *almost* means. Do you know what? When you get over here to *altogether*, it means something different. *Altogether* means: holy, thoroughly, completely, all, entire, full, total, totally, in full, lock-stock-barrel. There is a big difference between almost and altogether. Amen! That is what I want to talk about tonight just for a few moments.

Here is a guy by the name of Agrippa, a politician. A very influential man. He should have been someone that would have been very eagerly that if he was going to lead people—you would think people would want to listen to the voice of God so that they could lead them right. However, not everybody is always like that. Here is a guy that is sitting here very well educated. Here Paul is rehearsing all the things that had happened to him, about his conversion, how God speaks to him, the light, the voice, and the scales falling from his eyes, and all that God has done. Here he is preaching and telling him, “Hey, this same Jesus that I saw; He is the Messiah. He is the One that raised from the dead. He is the king of Israel, even though the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders want you to condemn me and kill me; Jesus the one that I am preaching to you about, the one that I met on the road that day—He is the Messiah.”

Do you know what? Agrippa should have been a guy that would have been listening to him. Shouldn't he? Do you know what he did not do? Even though he was there, well educated, political guy, probably had all kinds of people around him, he was almost. He did not get there. He uses the word *almost*...

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

I am near. I am close. You just about did it. I am just a little bit less than being a Christian. That is what he is saying. Get that. I am just a little bit less than being a Christian. I am just a little bit short. I am not totally there but I am just a little bit short. I am almost. I just lack a little bit. I am pretty near being a Christian.

Do you know what? *Almost* is not good enough. Amen! Being almost, being pretty close, being near and all of that is not close enough. That is what I want to talk about.

What are we? Are we almost? Or, are we altogether? Are we wholly, completely, totally a Christian? Top to bottom, inside and out; heart, soul, mind, and strength. Get this—remember this. Do not forget this.

Your salvation depends on...I am going to say this. Hear me just a minute. When you got saved, something happened. Your intellect was touched. You heard the Word.

Agrippa heard. His intellect—he heard. Not only that, I think, when I read the story and how close that he is; do you know what happens? His emotions are touched. Amen! He is almost there. He knows he is almost there. I think he probably enjoyed listening to Paul. He is almost there. His emotions are touched but something did not happen. He was touched in his intellect, in his mind. He heard. His emotions were stirred. Do you know what did not happen? His will did not change. He did not say, “Yes, I am going to follow Jesus Christ.” Salvation has to do with our intellect, our emotions and our will.

I can be stirred in my mind. I can be stirred in my emotions. However, if my will does not change, if I do not surrender my will to Him then I am not saved. I get close. We are near. We are almost there. That is not good enough guys. Church membership is great but that is not good enough. That is not close enough. Baptism is one of our ordinances that we do after people get saved and that is great. However, that is not good enough. There has to be more than that. There has to be more than that.

Agrippa here was a guy that was close. He was not very far away. He was just a little bit less than what a Christian should have been, however, he was not there and he did not make it.

I thought about and as I read this and studied this; I thought about so many people in scripture that would fit here. Almost. Judas. He was very near. He spent three years with Jesus. Get this. I am going to say something here that is going to shock some of you here. Jesus gave him power to heal. He had it. I do not read in the scripture where he used it but Jesus gave it to him. Amen! He was near. He was there. Listen. He was there when He raised people from the dead. When He fed thousands and thousands; Judas was there. He was near. Not totally there but he was close. He was almost.

The question we need to ask ourselves tonight is “Are we almost, or are we altogether?” Are we just almost there? Are we completely, wholly, sold out, thoroughly, all, full, entire, totally saved tonight?

Do you remember this story? Jesus, when you read—it may be Matthew 18 maybe 19, Mark 10, Luke whatever; it is mentioned through the gospels. The Bible says there was a young ruler that came to Jesus one day and said, “Hey, good Master, what do I need to do that I might inherit eternal life?” Do you remember that story? Jesus began to quote unto Him and tell him about some of the commandments. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and thy mother. You know. He names all five, six, seven of them. Here this guy is—there is no doubt in my mind, as Jesus is naming off all of this stuff, this guy gets bigger, swells up and gets bigger, swells up and gets bigger... Do you know what? When Jesus gets done talking; do you know what he says? “Lord, all of this stuff have I done from youth up. I have been a good guy, Lord. Lord, I am almost here. I am near. I am almost here. I have done all this stuff.”

Get this. Jesus looked at him and said, “You lack one thing.” If you want to get here, there is one thing you lack. Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor. Come and follow me and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Amen!

Do you know what the Bible says happens? This guy goes away sorry, sad, grieving. Do you know why? Because he had great possessions.

Listen. He was close. He was very near. He was just a little bit less than. In our world today, in Baptist churches, and in our lives sometimes; we think that is close enough.

However, I promise you... I am not mad. I am not upset... I want us to make sure that we are altogether saved. From the top to the bottom, inside and out, everything about us. We had better make sure that we have the goods. Do you know why? Because our eternal souls are depending on that.

It is not talking about getting a Big Mac at Mac Donald's. If you are a bad boy then we are not going to take you any ice cream. It does not have anything to do with that. Our eternal souls are in the balance. I have said this a thousand or a million times. Not only our soul, our children's souls, our grandchildren—and they are watching us. They are watching every move that we make. If you do not think they do just ask them sometime. Do you know what they will tell you? They will tell you some things that you probably do not want to hear. They watch us. Your neighbors watch us. amen! People you see at the grocery store watch you.

I have said this here many times. If you are going to wear a Campbell Chapel shirt when you go to Walmart, do not act like an idiot. Okay? Please do not do that. If you are going to go over there and do that then please do not wear a Campbell Chapel shirt. You can wear the Rock Hill shirt, or the Ohio State shirt, or the Ironton shirt but please do not wear... I got taught this lesson at school.

Many years ago, when we were doing devotions at school, we would buy shirts. At that time, we would have 80 or 100 kids that would come to devotions every day out there. We would put all the kids names in a box and we would draw them out. Whoever name we drew out, we would give them a tee shirt. I thought that was a good idea but I was totally wrong. It was not. Do you know why? I saw some of those kids wearing those tee shirts that had Campbell Chapel on them; screaming, hollering, cussing, throwing things and doing all kinds of stuff. Do you know what I figured out? That was not such a good idea after all. Truth?

Are we almost? Or—are we altogether, wholly, totally whole, thoroughly, completely, all, entire, full, totally full, full to the fullest?

We used to say this statement all the time: lock-stock-barrel. Do you know what that meant? That meant the whole thing. It meant the whole thing. It meant all of it.

Do you know what Paul was? Paul was not almost. Paul was completely, totally, altogether. I sat today and I read through the 2 Corinthians 12, through many verses—Paul did to the church at Corinth and all the things he suffered. You go down to verse...towards the end of the chapter. He lists all the disasters, where he had spent hungry, cold, beaten, shipwrecked. He names this whole list of stuff. He gets down towards the end of the chapter and he said, besides all of this, all of this other stuff—I have been beaten, left for dead, hungry, cold, shipwrecked, besides all of that; I got to care, I got to take care of, I got the weight of all the churches. Do you remember reading that? That is in 2 Corinthians 12—read it. Do you know why Paul could be beaten and get up from the ground and go back in town and say “Hey, guys you need Jesus. Amen! Do you know why Paul could be shipwrecked, snake bit, hungry, cold,

and face all that he faced; do you know why he could do that? Because he is altogether; totally, completely, from top to bottom, he was sold out to Jesus. Sold out to Jesus.

I thought today, how much more influence that I would have if when little issues come up—compared to what Paul went through—there is not much at all. I have not been left outside the city beating the rocks and everybody thought I was dead. Have you? Nope. I have not been shipwrecked. I have not been hungry since I have been a Christian because I am a Christian. You know, Paul suffered these things because he was a Christian. I have not been hungry because I am a Christian. There have been times when I went to bed, years ago, when we did not have anything but we were not Christians then.

He suffered all of this because one day on a road going to Damascus with murder in his heart; Jesus Christ spoke to him. Paul said, “Hey, I had enough of this. I have had enough of almost. I have had enough of this.” Do you know what Paul knew? Paul knew that he did not have what he needed. He knew that there was something else lacking in his life. However, the day he met Jesus, the day that a little guy came down the road and prayed with him and the scales fell off his eyes—he got what he needed. The journey and the battle began.

Ask yourself a question tonight. Are we almost there? Are we almost saved?

We spend time at church. We do church things. We read our Bible. We listen to Christian music. We do all of that stuff. Sometimes we think, “I am almost there. I am close.” Amen!

Judas probably thought that too. He is the guy that sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He is the guy that took the money, brought it back in to the chief priests, threw it down on the floor and said, “Hey, I have betrayed the innocent blood.” Do you know what they said? You see to it. Do whatever you want to with it. that is your business. They took it and bought a potter’s field to bury strangers in. do you remember reading that? Judas goes out and hangs himself. He was almost.

Friend, listen. Almost is not good enough. We need to be altogether there.

Come and pray—