Almost Is Not Enough

Acts 26:28-29  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.

Introduction
An unusual thing happened on a Saturday evening this past June.

• It was the final event for the women’s 100-meter portion of the Olympic trials. Eight women lined up for an 11 second race.
  o The first three finishers would earn individual places on the U.S. Olympic team for the London Olympics.
• Four years of training boiled down to this one race.
  o In eleven seconds three women would succeed and five of them would fail.
• However, the race unfolded in an entirely unexpected manner.
  o Carmelita Jeter, who has been the fastest woman in the world for the last three years, won the race.
  o Tianna Madison, a one-time world champion in the long jump suddenly turned sprinter, was second.
• Behind them came athletes at opposite ends of the professional spectrum.
  o In Lane Two was Allyson Felix,
    ▪ a two-time Olympic silver medalist in the 200 meters,
    ▪ three-time world champion
    ▪ and one of the most prominent track Olympians of the last decade.
  o In Lane One was Jeneba Tarmoh,
    ▪ a virtually unknown runner who made her first worlds team last summer.

In that decisive moment that should have determined the next chapter for each of them,

• they crossed the finish line at the exact same instant.
  o The finish was so close that images taken with a high-speed camera couldn’t tell who was faster.
    ▪ And it really mattered who was faster,
      • because there was only one spot left on the team.
• In that unique moment of time one of those ladies was fast enough
  o and one of them was almost fast enough.
    ▪ The difference was absolutely miniscule.
• As a matter of fact, the difference was so significantly small that it was beyond the scope of the most advanced technology in the world to determine which runner was the winner.
  o Eventually it was determined that there would be a run-off
    ▪ but, in another shocking turn of events,
Almost I is Not Enough

Jeneba Tarmoh withdrew from the race
and conceded the final spot on the team to her competitor.

My point tonight is not to enter into a discussion about photo finishes, I’m sure that there has been plenty of that in the months since that event,

- **but rather to point out that Ms. Tarmoh almost represented the US in the women’s 100-meter race.**
  - Almost.
    - You can’t get much closer than she got.
      - She almost made it…

**Almost**

Almost is a big little word.

- It carries within it a bundle of excuses.
  - Contained within the woeful little word, almost, are many broken dreams and unachieved goals.
- He almost crossed the goal line,
  - the ball was almost a home run,
  - Al Gore was almost president of the United States.
- Almost!
  - There is an old saying that **almost** only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.
    - This may or may not be true.
      - There may very well be other situations, times and places where almost is good enough.
- But, let me respectfully tell you this evening that in matters of eternity, **almost will never be enough!**

**Almost Saved**

There is no special designation in eternity for those that were almost saved.

- There is no consolation prize for almost making it to heaven.
  - I want to be very plain today,
    - there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun
    - and there is no middle ground!
- Either you make heaven your home or you bust hell wide open.
  - There is no secondary holding place for those that almost made it to heaven.
- Make no mistake about it this evening, to be almost saved is to be completely lost!

- Sin, when it entered the world brought death.
  - Christ when he died on the cross brought life
    - To be lost is the condition of being spiritually dead.
      - Salvation, on the other hand contains within it spiritual life.
  - Physical life and death, are reflective of their spiritual counterparts.
Almost Is Not Enough

Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

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**Paul said, I am crucified with Christ (dead) and yet I live…**

- I want to point out to you this evening that while it is entirely possible to be alive, but almost dead…
  - But It is completely impossible to be dead but almost alive!

- There is no distinction for the “almost alive.”
  - Either you are or you aren’t there is no middle ground.

**Agrippa**

In our text we see the Apostle Paul standing before Agrippa.

- Agrippa as described by Josephus, was a mild, candid, and ingenious man.
  - He had no particular hostility to Christians;
    - he knew that they were not justly charged with sedition and crime.
  - He realized their innocence, and he was familiar with their scriptures.

- At some point he studied the Hebrew prophets
  - and followed their message to the logical conclusion that the Christians had the real thing.

- Acts 26 is the most critical moment in his life.
  - Paul has given a very stirring testimony of his conversion,
    - about his meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus.

- He has, with great passion and moving conviction,
  - shared the experience that forever changed his life.

- King Agrippa was deeply moved by the compelling words of the minister in chains.
  - Conviction gripped his heart,
    - he heard the man of God,
    - he believed the word of God
    - and he was ALMOST compelled to turn to the Lord for salvation.
    - Almost!

- But somewhere something in his heart robbed him of the faith to follow thru on what he felt.
  - Some fear,
  - some doubt,
  - some addiction,
  - some compulsion,
  - something caused him to stop short and say to Paul,
    - “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

- It may have been that the evidence was not so clear to his mind as he would profess to desire;
  - Maybe he was not willing to give up his sins;
  - Or perhaps he was too proud to rank himself with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth;
    - It is even possible that, like Felix, he was waiting for a more convenient season.

- However, there is every reason to believe that he was never quite persuaded to embrace the Lord Jesus;
Almost I's Not Enough

o And that he was never nearer the kingdom of heaven than he was at that moment in Acts 26 when he said, I'm almost persuaded.

• It was the most critical moment in his life,
  o the turning point,
  o up until then he had looked upon Christianity as a possible truth
  o but that day he evaluated it
  o and somehow he fell short of the mark of total conviction.

• Like thousands of others, he neglected or refused to allow the truth to fully convict him
  o and there is every reason to believe that he died in his sins.
    ▪ What a shame, to be almost saved.

I dare say this evening that there are many people in the same place as Agrippa.

• There may even be some under the sound of my voice this evening.
  o You've been touched by the truth of the word of God
  o You've been convicted by anointed preaching.
    ▪ The power of God has gripped your heart and stirred something within you.
    ▪ But, for a variety of reasons, that only you understand, you've refused to be fully persuaded.

No Excuse

One young man told a friend that he did not wish to become a Christian.

• "Why not?" asked his friend.
  o He replied: "Several years ago I was selling from door to door and was invited into a house to show my product to the wife and children.
    ▪ While I was demonstrating, the husband came home, swore at me, and kicked me out.
    ▪ He was supposed to be a Christian.
    ▪ From that time I decided never to have anything to do with religion.
  o His friend asked him, "Would you write down your reason in full and sign it?"
    ▪ With hesitation, the young man did as asked.
  o Then the paper was handed back to him with these words:
    ▪ "Keep this, and when you are asked for your excuse on the Day of Judgment, hand this to God."

I don't know what your excuse is this evening.

• I don't know what it is in you life that holds you back from embracing the gift of God.
  o But can I tell you this evening that on that great day of judgment, there will be no excuses.

• All of the things that seem so important now will seem so petty then.
  o In the light of the awesome reality that everything contained within the Bible is true, all of our excuses will seem so shallow and empty.

• Your mind will drift back to a Wednesday Evening in an apostolic church when a man of God preached and the conviction of the truth of God gripped your heart.
A moment when you were stirred, moved and convicted but only almost persuaded.

- But then it will be too late.

- In that instant you will realize, as Agrippa will realize that you let salvation slip thru your fingers – it was within your grasp but you were not fully persuaded.

**Noah**

Probably the best image of the church and salvation in the Old Testament is contained within the story of Noah.

- God shared with Noah the fact that judgment was coming and God showed Noah a way of escape.
  - It took years for Noah to build the ark that would save him and his family from the coming flood.
    - (Some Scholars say it took 120 years!)
- This preacher of righteousness spent every day of his life building the ark and preaching to the lost.
  - He knew judgment was coming and he did his best to reach a lost and condemned world with his message of truth and salvation.
  - Many heard him preach, many laughed at the crazy old man that was building a boat on dry ground.
    - But what about those that heard his words and were touched.
    - What about those that recognized the truth in what he was preaching
      - Those whose hearts were gripped by conviction,
      - those who were stirred and compelled to listen to what Noah was saying.
- Out of the multitude of people, there must have been some that were convicted by this great preacher of righteousness.
  - There must have been some that were ALMOST persuaded.
    - They ALMOST made a change,
    - they ALMOST embraced the truth.
- When Noah and his family finally entered the ark and waited for God to close the door, they ALMOST rushed on board.
  - They ALMOST made it,
    - they were almost saved from the storm.
- But, my friend when the rain came and the floodwaters rose, they found themselves in the same condition as everyone else.
  - Almost saved, is completely lost.
- It did them no good to beat on the door of the ark and cry out to Noah,
  - preacher, you almost reached me.

**Good Intentions**

- If we could walk through hell today we would find all sorts of people who were at one point almost persuaded to become a Christian.
  - Hell doesn’t mind if you go to church,
    - hell doesn’t mind if you hear anointed preaching.
Almost Is Not Enough

- Hell doesn’t even mind if your heart is gripped by conviction.
  - Hell doesn’t mind at all if you are almost saved.
- If you are sitting on a church pew with good intentions of someday getting right with God, you are right where hell wants you.
  - If you sit out there Service after Service thinking, one of these days I’m going to make a change,
  - one of these days, I’m going to become the man or woman god called me to be.
  - One of these days I’m going to sell out the whole route.
    - I see the truth, I’ve been convicted, I’m almost convinced…
- Just as surely as God shut the door to Noah’s ark and forever sealed the fate of all those that were not on board.
  - My friend there is a day coming when without warning the trump of God is going to sound
    - and at that moment the door will to the ark of safety will slam shut to never be opened again.
- It could happen now, it could happen here, this could be the day.
  - Or it could be tomorrow, next week, next month or next year.
- It matters little when that day is, it only matters that you understand two things
  - 1) He’s coming back like a thief in the night,
    - when you least expect him he will split the eastern sky and
  - 2) on that day, almost isn’t going to be good enough
- There is a reason why the parable of the 10 virgins is in the bible,
  - 5 of them almost made it,
    - they were almost saved but almost wasn’t enough!
- I want to caution you this evening,
  - I feel compelled to plead with you
    - Don't wait too long, only to find yourself in Hell saying, “I was Almost persuaded.”

You may think in the back of your mind, I’ll take a chance, I’ll get right with God later on, but my friend there may be no later on.
- Death will visit us all someday.
  - For some it comes sooner than others.
    - For many it comes without warning.
- It will profit you nothing if in your dying hour as the physicians struggle to save your life,
  - when your consciousness is fading,
  - you are aware that you’ve fallen short but find yourself unable to do anything about it.
- It will make no difference in eternity if a preacher stands over your casket and laments the fact that you almost came to the alter,
  - you almost repented of your sins,
    - you almost prayed thru.
- I’m deadly serious this evening, there is coming a time when it will be too late.
  - There is a reason why the scripture says, in II Chorinthians 6:2,
Almost I's Not Enough

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"For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

• Now is the time to answer the call of God!
  o Now is the time to bend your knee in repentance!
  o Now is the time to make sure everything is right between you and your savior.
  o None of us are promised tomorrow.
    ▪ None of us are promised another chance.
    ▪ Today is the day!

• With an eternal hell of punishment to be shunned
  o and a glorious heaven to be won,
    ▪ we dare not be careless with our salvation.

• Every one that hopes to make heaven their home must honestly ask the question that was asked on the day of Pentecost.
  o “Men and brethren, what shall we do.”

• 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.
  o It won’t be enough to say, on judgment day, I repented of almost all of my sins.
    ▪ Or I almost got baptized.
    ▪ Or, God forbid, I almost got the Holy Ghost,
      • but for some reason I never was able to relinquish control of my life.

• I believe if I was in this place this evening
  o and, if for any reason I was only almost saved,
    ▪ I would find a place in this alter and pray until I broke thru to the glory of God.

CLOSE
It will be the saddest song in Hell.

• It was written by Philip Bliss after he had an inspiration following a sermon he had just listened to.
  o The Reverend Brundage ended his preaching with a sentence that rang in his ears.

• He said, "He who is almost persuaded is almost saved, and to be almost saved is to be entirely lost."
  o After hearing this, Bliss was very impressed and later that afternoon composed the hymn, "Almost Persuaded."

• It’s verses contain these words:
  o Almost persuaded now to believe;
    ▪ "Almost persuaded" Christ to receive:
    ▪ Seems now some soul will say,
    ▪ "Go, Spirit, go Thy way;
    ▪ Some more convenient day

Almost Is Not Enough
Almost Is Not Enough

- On Thee I'll call.”
  - "Almost persuaded," but harvest is past!
    - "Almost persuaded," doom comes at last!
    - "Almost" cannot avail,
    - "Almost" is but to fail!
    - Sad, sad, that bitter wail,
    - "Almost," but lost!
  - I’m afraid Hell will echo with than long bitter wail…
    - Almost… I almost made heaven my home.
    - I was almost saved…
    - I almost went to the alter.
    - Almost, but lost.
- The great evangelist Charles Spurgeon said,
  - “Almost persuaded… is like the man who was almost pardoned, but he was hanged;
    - like the woman who was almost rescued, but was burned in the house.
- A man that is almost saved is totally lost.
  - Don’t leave this house tonight,
    - having been convicted by the word of God
    - but having only come part of the way to the cross.
- My friend, there’s a day coming when almost won’t be enough.
  - Why don’t you come to the altar this evening and forever settle the issue.