

**November 15, 2020**

**Sermon Title: The Missionary's Testimony**

**Sermon Text: Acts 20:17-24 Acts 26:1-32**

### **Sermon Summary**

This message begins with an introduction which includes the backstory leading up to Paul's testimony before King Agrippa. Paul talks to the leaders of the church at Ephesus about his life and his desire to testify to the world about what Jesus had done for him and what He could do for anyone willing to receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord. We then look at Paul's actual testimony to King Agrippa, which is the third time his testimony is presented to us in the book of Acts. Four components of a missionary's testimony are examined which are: Life before Jesus, how you met Jesus, what Jesus did to make the meeting possible, and life after Jesus. The message ends with two compelling questions: Do you have a testimony? How long has it been since you shared your testimony?

### **Full Sermon Notes**

we have faith in our Lord Jesus. (Paul spoke the truth of the gospel to everyone)

Acts 20:22 "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. (Paul lived sent)

Acts 20:23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. (Paul was fully aware of the cost, but was determined and dedicated, watch...)

Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

What a powerful word from Paul! Paul talks about His witness while he was with them. He talks about serving the Lord, his hero, he talks about how much he cared for the people, he talks about his suffering, he talks about his preaching to them the gospel, he even talks about living sent, when he says, "compelled by the Spirit!" And then he talks about his new mission in life which was to accomplish his God-given mission of testifying to the good news of God's grace. And that is where the missionary's testimony comes into play! One cannot be a missionary without a testimony! What is a testimony? The first thing that comes to mind for a lot of people would be a testimony in the courtroom where someone testifies about something they saw when a crime was committed. Oxford Dictionary states it this way:

Testimony - 1. a formal written or spoken statement, especially one given in a court of law.  
2. evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something. 3. a public recounting of a religious conversion or experience.

I like to say your testimony is simply your story! It's your Jesus story! Let me ask you this: Did Paul have a testimony, a story of God's grace in his life? Yes he did and he had a passion to share his testimony with any and everyone who would listen...Jews, Gentiles, fellow cell mates in prison, prison guards, army commanders, angry mobs, the Jewish religious power brokers called the Sanhedrin, Governor's, Kings, sailors, and superstitious natives on an island called Malta, which you'll read about in your readings this week!

Paul makes it to Jerusalem and ends up being arrested as his friends had feared and as the Holy Spirit had shown him. But through the arrest, Paul gets to share his testimony numerous times and with even more people and would eventually make it all the way to Rome to share his testimony there. In our text today, he shares his testimony with King Agrippa. You will notice how Paul includes in his testimony these main components: His past life, what Jesus had done in order to save him, how he met Jesus, and the change it made in his life! So now I'm going to share with you Paul's testimony in his own words. Boys and girls, I want you and all of the adults in this room and folks meeting with us online, to use your imagination and pretend you are actually there listening to Paul the Apostle share his testimony!

Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense:

Acts 26:2 "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews,

Acts 26:3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

Acts 26:4 "The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem.

Acts 26:5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee.

Acts 26:6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today.

Acts 26:7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me.

Acts 26:8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

Acts 26:9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

Acts 26:11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

Acts 26:12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

Acts 26:13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

Acts 26:14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Acts 26:15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

Acts 26:16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.'

Acts 26:17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Acts 26:19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

Acts 26:21 That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

Acts 26:22 But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—

Acts 26:23 that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Acts 26:24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

Acts 26:25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.

Acts 26:26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.

Acts 26:27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Acts 26:29 Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Acts 26:30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them.

Acts 26:31 After they left the room, they began saying to one another, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment."

Acts 26:32 Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

What Agrippa and Festus didn't understand was that Paul's goal was not to be set free, but to make it all the way to Rome so he could testify of the gospel by sharing his testimony! And what a testimony! There were four main components of Paul's testimony which should be a part of every missionary's testimony! And remember, if you are a follower of Jesus, then you are by default a missionary. Why? Because we have been called by Jesus to be on mission for Him. We are co-missionaries with Christ in His mission to seek and to save those who are lost. We have been commissioned by Jesus to make disciples! And in order to do that effectively we need to be willing to testify to the gospel by sharing our testimony! What are the four components of Paul's testimony?

1. His life before Jesus
2. How he met Jesus
3. What Jesus did to make the meeting possible

#### 4. His Life after Jesus

##### **Component 1: Paul tells of his life before Jesus**

Paul tells them he was raised in the strictest sect of the Jewish faith and had become a Pharisee. He then proceeds to tell them of the horrible persecutions he had personally been responsible for bringing against Christians.

Acts 26:9 “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

That had to be hard for Paul to bring up. I’m sure he struggled in his heart with what he had done to people! He knew he had been forgiven, but to rehash the past had to be difficult to him, but Paul wanted to make sure everyone realized and saw how far God’s grace can reach, how great God’s mercy can be, and how God can forgive even the vilest of human beings if they will let Him! This was a powerful part of Paul’s testimony and it had to have garnered the attention of those listening. Paul wasn’t proud of what he had done, but he was very thankful he could showcase the love of God towards the repentant sinner! Listen to what Paul would later write in his letter to Timothy...

1 Timothy 1:13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

1 Timothy 1:14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

1 Timothy 1:16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

When we share our testimony we need to let folks know a little bit about our lives before we met Jesus. You don’t have to go into the details of your sin, but you can talk in general about how lost you were! How you lacked peace, purpose, direction, and meaning in life and lived in fear, not knowing what was ahead for your life or your eternity. Now I know there are some folks who were raised in church and accepted Jesus into their hearts and lives at a very early age and may not have a Saul to Paul kind of testimony! But all of us can talk about the emptiness, uneasiness and lack of hope we had before we decided to trust Jesus! I have a dear friend who was saved when he was a young child, grew up in church, got really involved in the youth group and felt led by the Lord to go into ministry. He’s written some of the most powerful and meaningful worship songs I’ve ever heard. One day we were talking about our testimonies and he said he wished his was more exciting, come to Jesus after rebellion, type personality. I told him I wish everyone had his testimony. I said, “brother, you came to Jesus at an early age and

were smart enough to keep following Him in your teen years and now into your adult years. Because of this, you don't have to live with some of the regrets and scars that some of us have to live with! Your testimony is best! Kids, I pray that you will be smart enough to accept Jesus into your life at a young age and keep on living for Him. This will not only save your soul, but will save you from a lot of unnecessary heartache!

## **Component 2: Paul tells how he met Jesus**

Paul then tells Agrippa how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and what God had spoken to his heart. God had confronted Paul with what he was doing and convicted him of just how wrong it was and that when he was hurting others he was actually hurting God!

Acts 26:13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

Acts 26:14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Acts 26:15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

What was this "Kick against the goads" thing? When ancient farmers harnessed the oxen they would use wooden spikes to poke the legs of the oxen if they tried to kick and break loose. In Paul's efforts to advance a legalistic following of the letter of the law as a means of salvation, he was kicking up against the truth of God's grace, God's mercy and God's love shown to humanity through Jesus on the Cross! This had to be painful to Paul's soul, because we can see that Paul, even when he was Saul, was a sincere person, but he was sincerely wrong and he must have been a tormented soul! However, Jesus called out to him and Paul responded.

Acts 26:16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.

Acts 26:17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Acts 26:19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

Theologian T.C. Smith summed up this event this way in his commentary on Acts...

"In yielding to the heavenly call, Paul became an apostle of Christ to the Gentile world and renounced his commission from the chief priests. The apostle told the king that Christ commanded him to proclaim to others what he himself had experienced. His eyes had been opened. He had been delivered from darkness and saw the light. His sins were forgiven, and the power of Satan over his life had been broken. He had found a place among those dedicated

to Christ by faith. If such a marvelous change could occur in his life, it could also happen to others.”

When you share your testimony, tell folks how you came to know Jesus! Tell your story! Your story is powerful and is one of the most effective ways to reach our culture. People can argue about a lot of things, and they can even question your story, or reject your story, but it's your story, your testimony and that's something they can't take away from you and something God may use to bring them to the gospel story. In fact, look at the next component...

### **Component 3: Paul tells what Jesus did to make it possible for them to meet**

Acts 26:22 But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— Acts 26:23 that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

Paul knew that his testimony would not have been possible without the saving work of Jesus on the Cross. He also had seen how Jesus was the fulfillment of the law and was indeed the one foretold by the prophets and Moses in the Old Testament to be the Savior, the Lamb of God, the Suffering Servant. This was Paul's way of sharing the Gospel truth with these people. When we share our testimony it should also include the gospel story of what Jesus did on the Old Rugged Cross in order to clothe us in His righteousness. In fact, here's the way Paul put it in Romans...

Romans 3:22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,  
Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
Romans 3:24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.  
Romans 3:25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

Paul would later say...

Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.  
Romans 10:13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

You might have someone say: “Saved from what?” You could remind them of your former life, but you can also let them know what you have been saved to!

This is where you get to the next component of your testimony...

### **Component 4: Paul alludes to his life after Jesus**

Acts 26:29 Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

"Become what I am?" What is Paul talking about? Paul was no longer in bondage to the law! Paul was no longer in bondage to fear or to the haunting sins of his past! He was now a free man except for the physical chains that were on his hands! But that mattered not to Paul, because Paul was now a free man emotionally, spiritually and mentally! He had never been more free! I love the way Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:1...

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

When you share your testimony, talk about the difference Jesus has made in your life in the here and now, but you can also talk about the peace you have concerning your eternity! One of the things I like to share with people is how before I found Christ, I was so worried about what would happen when I die. I love living and want to live in this world as long as The Good Lord will allow it, but I'm simply not worried about my departure someday, because Jesus has kept His promise to the disciples and we are followers of Christ as well! What was that promise?

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Here's one of the most important questions you will ever be asked...  
Do you have a testimony? If not, that could change this very day!!

And here's another very important question...

If you have a testimony, how long has it been since you shared your testimony?

Let's pray!