

Series: "Finishing What was Started"

C.R. 4-14-24

'The Power of a Personal Testimony'

Text: Acts 22

Intro: I have often thought about if you only had one more chance to talk the people you love dearly one more time what would you say? If you were going to speak at your own funeral through recorded message, what would be the theme of that message?

Paul has asked the Romans soldiers for the chance to talk to his people. He doesn't know for sure if it will be the last time, but Paul knew the theme of his message. It would be his testimony. That is what we are going to talk about today. Our testimony, and the power of a personal testimony. What should be included in our testimony? Paul gives us a great sketch here today.

1) Paul's Life before Christ. (v. 1-5)

- a. I am indeed a Jew: Paul spoke as a Jew unto Jews. He was careful to lay the common ground between them. With this, Paul began telling the story of his life before Jesus Christ and then his conversion.
- b. Where he was born, where he grew up, where he went to school, who his teacher was.
- c. All of these things would bring a commonality into the conversation.
- d. I am a Jew. Paul is laying out his credentials as a Jew.
- e. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Philippians 3:5.
- f. He says that I persecuted the Way to death. I was zealous for the law to the point that I chased down people who went another way.
- g. The high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I received letters: Paul did his work of persecution with the official approval of the religious leaders.

- h. **Illustrate:** What mine sounds like. I am a mountain boy. I am a Haywood County boy. I grew up here. I went to this school. Etc.....
- i. The message is clear: "I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from." Paul had been a Christian for more than twenty years, but could still relate to those who were not Christians.
- j. What does your story say about you before Christ?

2) Paul's Encounter With Christ. (6-16)

- a. **Suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me:** Paul was a determined persecutor of Christians and Jesus until this heavenly light shone on him. It is as if Paul said: "I was just like you all, until I had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus met me and my life was dramatically changed."
- b. Paul then notes details. The conversation he had with Jesus (not a dead Jesus, but a living one).
- c. He talks about the directions he was given, the blindness, how others around him heard the voice.
- d. **Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews:** Paul noted that it was **Ananias**, a man with credentials as a good Jew who received him into the Christian family.
- e. Paul wanted them to know that he still served the God of his fathers. He had not rejected Judaism. Instead, many in Judaism had rejected God as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- f. He made it clear that an encounter with Jesus will change a life.

3) Paul's Ministry in Christ (v. 17-21)

- a. He changed me, and then directed me. He had something for me to do.
- b. I was back in Jerusalem and while praying in the temple Jesus came to me to warn me, and to give me guidance.
- c. He probably thought of himself as the perfect one to bring the gospel to his fellow Jews. Nevertheless, Jesus gave him this warning, even telling him to make haste.
- d. Paul had a plan, God had a different plan.
- e. Paul made it clear that it wasn't his idea to preach to the Gentiles; this was God's plan, not his. He hoped it also explained to the

crowd why he seemed so friendly to the Gentiles: Paul was simply obeying Jesus and His word to him.

- f. The crowd was with Paul until he used one word “gentile”.
- g. The mob listened carefully up to this point. In their minds, they didn’t mind this talk about Jesus, but they could not stand the idea that God might save Jews and Gentiles alike and in the same way.
- h. The message of Jesus — that both Paul and the New Testament preached — is this: You may come to God just as you are — Jew, Gentile, foreigner, high, low, rich, or poor — but you must come to Him through Jesus Christ.
- i. **Swindoll:** *Paul’s method, however, offended them on two counts. First, he refused to bring Gentiles into the kingdom of God through the door of Judaism, implying that Gentiles and Jews stood on an equal plane before God. Second, his notice that he had turned to the Gentiles sent the message that God had set aside the Jews.*
- j. Now they want Paul dead for sure.

Conclusion: So what would you say if you only had one more chance to say it. *He merely told the truth of his own experience with Jesus Christ: his life of sin before, his conversion, and his ministry after. The audience saw themselves in his “before” picture and they didn’t like what they saw. The audience saw themselves in contrast to Paul’s “after” picture and they liked the reflection even less. The apostle didn’t set out to convince the Jews to convert; he only determined to tell the truth. What they did with the truth, he left to the Holy Spirit. People won’t like what we have to say. Our job is not to change their minds; our responsibility is to proclaim the truth. Nothing more. Nothing less.*

Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Acts (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 5) (p. 691). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.