

## Acts 21:37-22:29 “Sharing Your Testimony” 2.1.15

**Intro.** the essence of your story in Christ (testimony): what it used to be like, what happened, how it is today. Five times in the NT Paul’s testimony is Why? Your story is a powerful tool to reach others for Christ. Samaritan woman **Jn. 4**

**Subject: Paul shares his testimony (before the Jewish mob)**

**Object: Share your story in Christ**

**Context [21:37-40]** Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?” He replied, “Can you speak Greek? 38Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?”39But Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people. 40So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew language, saying: Paul wanted to speak in his defense & proclaim the gospel despite the hostile mob [boldness]. Charges: bringing Gentiles into the temple area restricted to Jews, and teaching Jews not to follow Mosaic law.

### 1. What it used to be like [1-5] Your life before Christ

1“Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.”2And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: 3“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. 4I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,5as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

**a. respect [1-2]:** refers to the mob as **brethren and fathers [elders]**

**b. connect: [2-5]**

**i. common language [2]: spoke to them in the Hebrew language:** avoid “Christianese” [\* I was lost in my trespasses and transgressions living in darkness]

**ii. common identity [3] as Jews**

**iii. credentials [3-5]** disciple of famed Rabbi Gamaliel [3], zealous toward God [3], persecuted the Church [4-5]. **1Tim.1:13**

### 2. What happened [6-13] How you received Christ as Lord [Paul @ 20 yrs before]

**a. How he came to experience Christ [6-7]**

6“Nowit happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. 7And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’

i. vision of a light brighter than sun [6]. Paul fell to the ground re fear or reverence [7]

ii. **why are you persecuting Me? [7]** Jesus’ relationship to His church

\*bz exp. re Bible with index of Messianic prophecies in OT fulfilled by Jesus

\* Good Friday service and baby block with initial BZ

## **b. How he yielded to Christ [8-13]**

**8**So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’**9**“And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. **10**So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’ **11**And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.**12**“Then a certain **Ananias**, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*, **13**came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him.

i. Most important question, **Who are You, Lord? [8]** rabbi, philosopher, sage, or the Christ – God in the flesh?

ii. **I am Jesus [8]** Realize that Jesus is alive [Resurrection]

iii. others saw the light but did not hear the voice (call) [9]

iv. **What shall I do, Lord? [10]** yielded to Christ. Calls Jesus Lord [10,8], called a brother by Ananias [13] (a devout man with a good testimony & a reliable witness)

v. Paul obeys the command to go to Damascus [10-11]

vi. blinded by the light of God’s glory [11] then sight miraculously restored [13]

## **3. How it is today [14-21] How Christ changed your life.** Jn.9 Blind man’s story

**a. Chosen to know God’s will, see Christ [the Just One] and hear Him [14]** Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

**b. Called to share his experience with Christ [15]** For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard: \* share *your* experiences

**c. Baptized as a symbol of identification with Christ’s death & resurrection [16]** And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord: baptism is not the means of cleansing from sin but faith in Christ

**d. Called to serve the Gentiles [17-21]** Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance **18**and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’ **19**So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. **20**And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ **21**Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.

i. between v.16-17 there is a 3-year gap [Gal.1:18].

ii. Jesus warns Paul to leave Jerusalem [17-18]. Paul surprised the Jews would not receive from him because of his former zeal in persecuting Christians [19-20].

iii. Paul’s ministry would be far away from Jerusalem (ie. outside Israel) **to Gentiles**

? Who has God called you to serve and how have those experiences changed you?

**4. The response [22-29]** And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” 23Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air, 24the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.25And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”26When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.”27Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman? ”He said, “Yes.”28The commander answered, “With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.” And Paul said, “But I was born *a citizen*.”29Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

**a. God will use your unique personality and experiences to reach people for Christ, but be prepared that not all you share with shall receive the gospel.**

b. When Jews heard he felt called to **Gentiles** they rejected him & the gospel

i. Paul spoke to the mob in Aramaic & based on the mob’s intense reaction the commander presumes he must be a serious offender. So he planned to whip Paul to get a confession [24]. Paul was a Roman citizen so he could be beaten without a trial [24-29]. Become a citizen by birth, a reward for special service, purchase at high price.

ii. Paul’s unique background as a Jew who knew the Scripture and a Roman citizen was used by God

**Conc: Share your story in Christ**

## Discussion Qs

**1. Briefly describe what your life was like before Christ.**

**2. Briefly describe how Christ was revealed to you and how you yielded to Him.**

**3. Briefly describe how Christ has changed your life.**

**4. Briefly describe your experience(s) sharing your testimony.**

**a. Pray that God would open doors for you to share your testimony.**

Note: Five times in NT Paul’s testimony is recorded [Ac.9, Ac.22, 25-26,Phil3, 1Tim.1]