

Session 6

January 5, 2020

WHAT PROOF DOES MY TESTIMONY OFFER?

Acts 26:2-5, 12-18, 24-26

Just prior to leaving for seminary, I was asked to give my personal testimony in my home church. At one point I mentioned that my testimony was rather mundane. I didn't have a Damascus road experience that knocked me off my donkey; I wasn't a former drug dealer or murderous gang member with a dynamic story of radical conversion. I was just me. Afterward, a well-seasoned church member took me aside and gently rebuked me for saying such a thing. "The same Lord Jesus who saved the apostle Paul also saved you," he said. "And there is nothing 'mundane' about that!"

In essence, your testimony is your story. It's the story of your experience in coming to Christ and the difference He made (and continues to make) in your life as a result. The story is really about what *Christ* has done. For this reason, every testimony shares some common characteristics: your life before Christ; how you came to salvation; and your life afterward. But it's also *your* story, so like fingerprints and snowflakes, no two are exactly alike.

Life before Christ (vv. 2-5). It's always best when someone actually wants to hear your story! In Paul's case he was invited to speak (v. 2). Notice Paul's demeanor; he is respectful and almost flattering, acknowledging Agrippa's understanding of the Jewish faith (v. 3). While the context is Paul defending himself against criminal charges, he uses the opportunity to weave his testimony into it. After all, the most defining moment in any believer's life is his coming to Christ; and the most central theme thereafter is his life as a Christ-follower. Paul's life before Christ consisted of strict Judaism (v. 5; see also Phil. 3:4-6). He saw the Christian church as a threat to God's "true" religion and to his own way of life. As a result, Paul "was ravaging the church" (Acts 8:3).

While most of us have never been guilty of such atrocities, the Bible teaches that apart from Christ we are "enemies of God" (Rom. 5:10). Jesus made it clear: "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matt. 12:30). Whether we came to Christ as children or as adults; from within the church or from without; we were all equally lost. As such, we were all enemies of God.

Life changed by Christ (vv. 12-18). We are not born as Christians. We are *re-born* as Christians. I recently brought a young mother into my youth room and asked her in front of the kids if giving birth was a real, tangible, identifiable event in history. She assured us it was. So is the new birth! Simply put, those who can't testify to a definitive new-birth experience have never had one! Paul's conversion to Christ was as definitive as it was dynamic. There was a bright light from heaven (v. 13), submission to the voice of the Lord in confrontation over sin (v. 14), the clear identifying of Christ (v. 15), and an undeniable calling to new life on Christ's behalf (v. 16-18). For Paul, this was a life-changing experience that no one could deny. The same thing can be said of our coming to Christ: it's a real and undeniable event.

Life with Christ (vv. 24-29). The initial response to Paul's testimony was one of skepticism and doubt (v. 24). But just because the natural (lost) man doesn't understand spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14), doesn't change the reality of our conversion. Paul didn't back down when he was

questioned, but with measured words and godly wisdom, he answered his critics with the truth (v. 25). Even though King Agrippa didn't profess Christ, Paul urged him to consider his own religious life, moving him one step closer to the cross. Remember: anyone can argue against your theology or religion. But no one can argue against the indisputable fact of a changed life.