

Sharing Your Testimony

Acts 22:3-8,15-22

February 11

Paul traveled to Jerusalem with a famine relief offering for Jewish-Christians. When he arrived in Jerusalem, James and the elders of the church reported to Paul that several Jerusalem Jews “had been informed you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses. . .” (Acts 21.21). This opposition to Paul led to the false charge that he brought Gentiles into the temple (Acts 21.26-29). Due to the threat of mob violence, Roman soldiers took Paul into custody. Paul asked the commander for permission to address the crowd. Paul used the occasion to reaffirm his commitment to Jewish heritage and to share his testimony of Christ.

Paul characterized his speech as a defense, that is, a defense against the false charges as well as a defense of the gospel.

What may we learn about sharing our testimony from Paul’s example?

First, Paul described his life before his conversion to Christ (Acts 22.3-5). Paul utilized his testimony as his defense against the charge of being an apostate Jew. Paul detailed his origins (born in the city of Tarsus), his nurture (brought up in Jerusalem), his education (studied under the most famous rabbi of the century), and his deeds (persecuted the church). Paul provided details of his misguided religious zeal. As an official agent of the Jewish hierarchy, he sought out, persecuted, arrested, imprisoned followers of “The Way.” His actions led to the death of Christians. Paul’s testimony highlights that religious people can be far from God.

Second, Paul recounted his life-changing encounter with the Risen Jesus (Acts 22.6-8, 15-16). On a purposeful journey to persecute believers, Paul encountered the risen Jesus. Jesus asked one question; Paul asked two questions. Jesus asked, “Why do you persecute me?” Paul persecuted the church; yet since the church is the body of Christ, in some sense Paul persecuted Jesus. In response, Paul asked, “Who are you?” and “What should I do?” In terms of the “who” question, Paul encountered the crucified, yet risen Jesus. In terms of the “what” question, a believer named Ananias supplied the answer. The risen Jesus gave Paul two responsibilities: God appointed Paul to be a witness of Jesus and God chose Paul to witness to all people.

Despite Paul’s religious background, education, and zeal, Paul had to call on the name of the Lord and receive baptism as a symbol of his repentance, cleansing, and inclusion within the community of followers of Jesus.

Third, Paul communicates his new life purpose after encountering the Risen Jesus (Acts 22.17-21).

Immediately after encountering Jesus, Paul began to share the gospel in Damascus and Arabia (Acts 9.26-29; Gal. 1.7). During this time, Paul was obedient to the commission to bear witness. When Paul returned to Jerusalem three years (Acts 9.26-30; Gal. 1.8) Paul had a vision of the Risen Jesus in which Jesus warned him to flee Jerusalem because of rejection (v. 18). In response to Jesus’ command, Paul said, “But Lord.” Paul’s “but” may be a slight protest. Likely, Paul felt his Jewish background qualified him to witness in Jerusalem. Members of the synagogues around Jerusalem knew of Paul’s former life as a persecutor. The synagogue Jews could observe that Jesus the Messiah had transformed Paul’s life. The Risen Jesus, however, commanded Paul to mission endeavors to Gentiles far away from Jerusalem.

The Risen Jesus calls all believers to be witnesses to Him. Outside the Bible, our testimony is the most powerful witnessing tool we possess. To sharpen the witnessing tool of our testimony, I encourage you to write your testimony, practice sharing your testimony with other believers, and be prepared to “go” as a witness into your Jerusalem (home), Judea (neighborhood) as well as the “uttermost parts of the earth.”