

Our church is so excited that the young people are going on the mission trip with Pastor Tony. Tonight in this message, I want to encourage you to testify everywhere. Not just at the Boardwalk Chapel, but along the road, and in a restaurant, and everywhere!

In the Bible, the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John present 132 contacts that Jesus had with people. Six were in the Temple, four in the synagogues and 122 were out with the people in the mainstream of life. You are going out to see people in real life, and we see this as a valuable thing to do. Since it is worth it to go all the way to New Jersey, it is worth it to testify.

The OPC Boardwalk Chapel in New Jersey is an interesting place, and I hope you all get an opportunity to go there. It brings in people who are curious, those searching, and it also brings in people who are skeptical, and may even want to spar with you. Christ is sending you to testify there, too!

Tonight I want to show you the unique circumstances in which Paul testified, as an encouragement for you to testify everywhere.

Christ sent Paul to Jerusalem to testify. Paul testified. The Jewish crowds tried to kill Paul, and the Roman commander arrested him to keep him safe. Paul then got permission from the commander to speak to the crowd. When Paul said his calling from the Lord was also to testify to the Gentiles, the Jewish crowd shouted, "He is not fit to live!" Paul was arrested a second time. Now, the commander wanted to have Paul beaten in order to get information about this whole riot. Paul said he was a Roman citizen, so the commander could not beat Paul. Instead, the commander brought together a special meeting of the Jewish leaders, the chief priests, and had them question Paul right away.

For the Lord, this was just another situation in which Paul was to testify!

God places Christians into special situations, in order to testify there too.

1. Testify by fulfilling duty to God and to the law. (v.1-5)

Verse 1 – Paul looked straight at the chief priests, and Paul said, “I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” Paul was testifying to his own behavior. Paul was saying that his actions and speech met God’s approval. Paul was convinced that it was the Lord who called him to minister to the Gentiles, and that Paul had not broken God’s law, or disrespected the Temple by bringing a Gentile into the temple. Paul knew he was a sinner. Paul was very clear about his wrongs in persecuting the church. But as to Paul’s relationship to God and to the law, it was clean and clear because of the death of Christ on the cross, and his resurrection. So, Paul confessed what he had done, and proclaimed his innocence for what he had not done.

Paul mentioned conscience here. Paul is the one who wrote in 1 Timothy 4:2 that a conscience can be seared as with a hot iron. Paul knew that our consciences are not reliable guides for us. Paul was not relying on his own conscience alone. Paul was saying that all of his sins were covered by the blood of Christ, his conscience was clear of the other charges.

Verse 2 – the response of the high priest Ananias was to order that Paul be struck on the mouth.

Verse 3 – Paul’s response was to prophesy that God would strike him, and Paul called him a whitewashed wall. That is, he was accusing the priest of being a hypocrite – a man who tried to look righteous, but was guilty. A man sitting in a group of high priests to judge someone, but was himself violating the law during that meeting by commanding that Paul be hit.

Verse 4 – those standing near Paul informed him that he was insulting God’s high priest.

Verse 5 – Paul now had an opportunity to testify by admitting his fault and apologizing, and coming back to Scripture.

2. Testify about the resurrection and expose others by their reaction to it. (v.6-10)

Verse 6 – we are told that Paul knew some were Pharisees, and some were Sadducees, a divided group. So, Paul stated that he was a Pharisee. And, Paul stated that he was on trial because of the main issue that divided those two groups.

Verse 7 – A dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The assembly was no longer deliberating on Paul’s case, but arguing about their own views, and the assembly was divided.

Verse 8 – tells us the issues. Sadducees – no resurrection, no angels, no spirits. Pharisees – yes for resurrection, yes for angels, yes for spirits.

This was clever – because Paul discredited their charges against Paul before the Roman commander. No Roman commander would adopt the charges from a Sanhedrin that was this contentious even within itself over interpretations of its own book – the Bible.

This was honest – Paul did not just bring up the issue of resurrection because it was the hot button issue for Pharisees and Sadducees. No, Paul brought up the issue of resurrection, because Paul honestly believed that Paul’s hope in the resurrection was the central reason why Paul was on trial there. The resurrection of Jesus is why Jesus appeared to Paul on the Road to Damascus (see Paul’s testimony in 22:7-10). The resurrection of Jesus is what turned Saul, a violent persecutor of the church, into Paul, an aggressive missionary for the church.

Verse 9 – the assembly reached the point of an uproar. The Pharisees stood up and vigorously argued that they found Paul innocent. They pointed to their own biased belief in angels and spirits, saying Paul may have received a revelation from a supernatural power.

Look at the Pharisees here. Earlier, they cried out, in chapter 22, verse 22, “*Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live!*” But here now in the next chapter, now that Paul is declared a Pharisee and speaking about resurrection, the Pharisees wonder whether maybe an angel has spoken to him!

Verse 10 – The dispute increased in violence. The commander was concerned that Paul would be torn to pieces by the two violent groups. The commander ordered the troops to take Paul out of there into the fort again.

3. As long as we live, we live to testify another day, in another situation. (v.11)

Verse 11 – The next night, the Lord stood near Paul (not described as a vision!). The Lord said, “*Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.*”

SI - a man at sea was very sea-sick. If there is a time when a man feels that he cannot do any work for the Lord it is then. While this man was feeling so sick he heard that a man had fallen overboard. He was wondering if he could do anything to help to save him. He found a light, and held it up in the window.

The drowning man was saved. Later, when this man finally got over his attack of sickness he was up on deck one day, and was talking to the man who was rescued. The saved man gave this testimony. He said he had gone down once, he had gone down the second time, and was just going down again for the last time, when he put out his hand. Just then, he said, someone held a light at the window, and the light fell on his hand. A sailor saw his hand and took him by the hand and pulled him into the lifeboat.

It seemed a small thing to do for a sick man to hold up the light in the window; yet it saved the man's life. If you cannot do some great thing you can hold the light for some poor, perishing drunkard, who may be won to Christ and delivered from destruction. Let us take the torch of salvation and go into this dark world, and hold up Christ to the people as The Light of the World.

Young people, as you go on this trip, you will be put in some unique circumstances to testify. You might be scared to do speak. Just remember that you have the answer that everyone needs. You know Jesus, who is the light of the world. Hold up the light.

Concluding Application:

The Lord Himself uplifts us, so that we keep on testifying. Are you discouraged? Are you worn out physically and spiritually? Are you overwhelmed with what you are facing? That was Paul’s condition. Then, the Lord stood near him.

It seemed like Paul had a bad day that was fruitless for missionary progress. There were encounters with crowds, fights among chief priests, an insult that Paul was guilty of giving to the high priest – just a bad day. However, note carefully what we read verse 11 - when the Lord stood near Paul that night, there was no reproach from the Lord about Paul’s witness. Paul had stated something against the high priest, but the Lord did not bring that up. From the Lord to Paul there is encouragement. From the Lord to Paul, there is the statement that Paul had testified about Christ in Jerusalem. From the Lord to Paul, there is confirmation of the plan that Paul should testify in Rome.

Testifying includes suffering. Okay, someone here has a question - why didn’t Jesus appear to Paul before Paul fell into danger? Because it is in our

hardships that our Lord consoles us. This shows us how Christ gives us comfort - just like how Christ gave Paul comfort. Jesus trains us in the middle of our suffering. We are all on a path of suffering. Our Lord suffered. The Apostle suffered. We must be willing to suffer to testify for Christ. Jerusalem was in turmoil because of the gospel. The chief priests were in violent dispute. Paul was under arrest. This is the kind of impact the gospel news sometimes has on mission fields and in our own neighborhoods. Paul had a speech to the people that was cut short. Paul had an address to the high priests that was interrupted. Paul had been beaten and arrested. Remember how important testifying was to Paul, in comparison to suffering. Acts 20:24, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." God did not remove all of the suffering from Paul's life. But God's grace is enough. 2 Corinthians 12:9, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.*" Sometimes, it is the suffering itself that is the genius part of God's design for you to testify to a new audience.

We are perfectly placed by God in order to testify. The Lord has placed you where we are, in order to testify of His grace. It is one thing to testify to people who are eager to hear the good news. Paul's setting was hostile. The Lord sent Paul to Jerusalem. The Lord was next to send Paul to Rome. Paul wrote to his student Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:2 to be ready in season and out of season to proclaim the Lord's goodness. And in 1 Timothy 6:13, Paul reminded his student Timothy of their teacher Jesus who in his testimony to Pilate, made the good confession. Paul tells Timothy to make a similar good confession of our faith where Timothy was. Same for where we are. The Lord has sent you here. Are you traveling or home, having a great time or suffering, working or a student, sick or in need, or facing a crisis, all of this is to be utilized for telling others about the love of God. Someone near you needs to hear your testimony. Someone near you needs to hear the gospel of the grace of Christ.

At a evangelistic meeting, The Rev. Billy Graham was to speak the next night and had arrived a day early. He came quietly and sat on the grass at the rear of the crowd. Because he was wearing a hat and dark glasses, no one recognized him.

Directly in front of Billy Graham sat an elderly gentleman who seemed to be listening intently to the gospel presentation of the preacher up front. When the preacher invited people to come forward as an open sign of commitment, Billy Graham decided to do a little personal evangelism in the back of the crowd. Billy tapped the elderly man on the shoulder and asked, "Would you like to accept Christ? I'll be glad to walk down with you if you want to." The old man looked him up and

down, thought it over for a moment, and then said, "Naw, I think I'll just wait till the big gun comes tomorrow night."

He was waiting for Billy Graham to speak, when Billy Graham was right in front of him speaking to him.

Young people, testifying is for you. You are not the apostle Paul, you are not Pastor Tony, you are not Pastor Jim (whom you will meet at the Boardwalk Chapel). But here is the thing. You know Jesus. When you testify, you are introducing people to someone you know.

Where-ever God takes you this week, testify there too.