

**Acts 21: 37 – 22: 1-15; “You Will Be His Witness”, Sermon # 81 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on September 4th, 2022, in the Morning Worship Service.**

I want to speak to you at this hour of the great importance of your learning to give your testimony to people around you. Your testimony is about you. But your testimony is also about Christ. It is about you in relation to Christ, and Christ in relation to you. You will notice that when Paul witnessed to this mob that there were some very important things that he communicated to them about Christ. And the Lord let Paul be able to say these very important things to them so that those rambunctious people might hear something of the gospel and be saved. Did you know that even if no one believes in Christ as a result of your telling them your testimony, that it is still fulfilling what Christ has called you to do?

Your testimony, if it speaks about the same subjects that Paul spoke of, will be a gospel witness that the Lord can use to save them by if He chooses to do so. So, I would like you to see that the words of Paul’s testimony are an example to us of what we should include in our relating how we ourselves were saved, so that we will be Christ’s witnesses. In giving your testimony, you should remember to include the following things: 1st of all – You should tell people what your life was like before you were saved. And 2nd – You should tell people about how you found the light of Christ, or how He found you. In relating these good things, you will be able to communicate much important gospel truth to people around you, who need to be saved from their sins.

1st of all – You should tell people what your life was like before you were saved.

The last time that we were together around this text we saw that Paul was very willing to publicly show to all the Jews his respect and love for God’s ceremonial law. He had followed the counsel of James and the elders in the church there in Jerusalem. He went into the temple with four men who had taken a Nazarite vow, he paid their expenses so that they might shave their heads. It was his hope and James’ hope, that in doing this, all the Jews would know that there was nothing to the things that they had heard about Paul’s not keeping the law as a Jewish person. We saw that Paul agreed to do this, but you need to know that he would not compromise the truth of the gospel in any way.

He still believed that Christ was the only way to salvation and eternal life. And he would continue to preach the same gospel in the future, that Christ had fulfilled the moral and the ceremonial law completely. He still believed and preached that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. He did not believe that circumcision was something that had to be performed on one’s children if that man was a Jew. But in going into the temple that day, and observing this ceremony by taking a vow, he simply was trying to accommodate the lack of understanding on the part of many Jews, of the perfections of the Lord Jesus.

The ceremonial law was a good thing before Christ came. But now that He had come and fulfilled all the ceremonies of the law, the ceremonial law was no longer needed. Christ by His life and His death, fulfilled all the ordinances of the ceremonial law in His Person and in His work. He broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile and was now making them into one new people. This is what many of the Jews did not care for about Christ, or Paul’s preaching of Christ. They believed that they were forever going to be God’s own people without the Gentiles being brought in with them. But this thinking was not right. The plans of God were much greater than the Jews understood in that day.

When Christ fulfilled all righteousness He purchased for all who believe in Him, a redemption from the bondage of sin. But He also purchased the Church, which would be composed not only

of Jews, but also Gentiles from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. In going with these men who had taken this vow, Paul simply wanted to prove to those Jews who did not understand, that he himself was faithful as a Jew to walk according to the customs. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Concerning the law, he wanted at every point to be blameless. But when he preached the great salvation which is found in Christ, it meant that he had come to know that Christ had completely fulfilled the law, both moral and ceremonial, on his behalf. When he took this Nazarite vow as a Christian man, he knew that the law needed to be seen by him, and everyone around him, in light of Christ's fulfillment of it.

But he also knew, and he preached this, that it was no longer necessary for these ceremonies to be performed now that Christ had come. But we see here that he was unwilling to offend those Jews who sincerely held to the law and observed it. He was very close to being able to succeed with this strategy of accommodation to the ignorance of Jews under the law, when certain Jews from Asia saw him in the temple, and they were personally greatly disturbed. They were greatly offended. They knew that when Paul preached Christ it meant the end of their thinking that they were saved by the ceremonies of the law.

And so they immediately cried out, "Men of Israel, help!", as if Paul was some sort of a criminal. They stirred up the crowd that was there for the Day of Pentecost, and they laid hands on him. And having falsely charged him, they dragged him out of the temple and would have beaten him to death if the Roman commander had not heard of it, and quickly came to assess the situation. His intervention at this critical point, saved Paul's life. He was in the process of bringing Paul into the barracks, to question him more closely, when in verse 37, Paul said to him – May I speak to you? And the commander was surprised. Do you speak Greek, he asks? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?

It is amazing sometimes what people will wrongly conclude about a Christian because unbelieving people are agitated over the gospel, and those who preach it. Paul calmly explained to him that he was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city. And he then implored the commander to let him speak to the people. He would seize the opportunity, and he would use this platform of the stairs that he was on, to give his testimony. Let me ask if this is you? Will you seize the opportunity when it presents itself to you, to tell of yourself and how you found Christ? Well, the commander gave him permission, and when he spoke to the crowd in the Hebrew language, they quieted down.

Paul was very calm and he used words which were calculated to show that he was a peacemaker. He would not compromise the truth of the gospel, but he would make the best appeal that he could; that of his own experience in what he was before Christ saved him, and then also what in Christ he would become. He shows these unreasonable men, great respect. He calls them brethren and fathers because they were his fellow countrymen. When they heard him speak to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.

And then he tells them of the past. He said – I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up this city at the feet of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was one of their great and honored teachers of the law. He said that he was taught according to the strictness of their father's law, and he was zealous toward God as all of them were, even though they had not yet believed. In giving our testimony we need to find common ground with sinners somehow, based upon our past sinfulness. We can affirm that zeal is a good thing, as Paul did here, even though theirs was not according to knowledge.

We can also tell them that just because a person is strict in relation to the law does not mean that they know the Lord. Many people think that knowing the Lord is being strict in keeping the traditions of the law or even sincerely trying to keep the law. There are many people out there today who mistake strictness for being a true Christian. They hover over their children continually, to make them comply with the law. They try to bring them into conformity with its demands, without ever speaking a word about Christ, or the greatness of the grace in Him. What kind of a testimony is this? It is a legalistic testimony, and it will never save one child. Let the children come to Jesus, and do not hinder them.

For mere compliance outwardly to God's law will never save anyone, child or adult. For there are sins in themselves that they do not see, and there is a righteousness which they should be pursuing which will only be found by their finding Christ. When they find Christ, they will go about to obey God's law, having right motives in their hearts; that is, humility and love for God and everyone around them, to win them to Christ. When a parent succeeds in getting his children to outwardly comply to God's law, sometimes he may think it is enough to conclude that they are a Christian. But it is not.

If you do this, you may actually make them into a self-righteous Pharisee, one who thinks highly of themselves and their own righteousness, and who looks down on others who are not able to keep the commandments of God outwardly as well as they themselves do. There is much deception here. The apostle Paul thought he was blameless according to the law before he was converted to Christ. It was his own righteousness that he preached. And he was zealous before he came to Christ. But he thought zeal was persecuting Christians to the death. How a man can think himself to be blameless when he was all the time guilty of malice and murder in his heart and his actions, is beyond me. But it is the deceptiveness of sin.

The application of the whole matter is this: It is good to love God's holy law. All of its moral commandments are holy, righteous, and true. All of His ceremonial law, its statutes and ordinances were right for Israel to observe for that Old Testament, Old Covenant time before Christ came. All of the law pointed forward to Christ and His coming, to Christ and His perfections. The people were given the law, the Jews, were supposed looking forward to their Messiah's coming, and the great redemption that He would come to bring. But many of them became more enamored with trying to justify themselves through the observance of the ceremonial law, and thought that they were being saved by their holding to that.

But Christ when He came, He fulfilled all righteousness, and therefore we need to bring to people's attention to this fact; that it is not a good thing to cling to the ceremonial observances of the law once the substance has come. Christ is that substance. Do you tell others of this, dear Christian? Outward moral behavior is good in any person, but it is not enough to save any person if they cannot perfectly keep the law. And the only one who has ever perfectly kept it, is Christ. Telling people what you were like before you were saved is a good thing. You can tell them what your sins were, without going into all the gory details and specifics of how you sinned.

You can tell people of the depth of your sins without speaking of those things of which you are now ashamed. If you were a morally compliant child or adult before you were saved, then tell people this, but show them where it was that you deceived yourself. You deceived yourself by trusting that your own righteousness would be enough to save you. You thought that you were better than other people. But now that have found Christ, you can say with all sincerity, that this was total self-deception.

2nd – You should tell people about how you found the light of Christ, or how He found you. (verses 6-10)

“Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.” “And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’” “So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’” “And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’” “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.” “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.’”

I trust that you understand that the vast majority of people who have been saved by Christ have never had this kind of dramatic physical or spiritual experience that the apostle Paul did when they were saved. No one who I have ever heard of has had a conversion experience like the apostle Paul. Most people do not see a light shining from heaven or hear the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking to them. But I want you to understand that all people who are saved, in every case, have had spiritual light shined into their hearts as it says in 2nd Corinthians 4, verse 6 – “For it is the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

In order to be saved, a person must have a Divine and supernatural light shined into their heart. Divine and supernatural light comes to a person when the Holy Spirit illumines their mind to the beauty and glory of Christ. Those who sit in darkness have seen a great light. How did they see it? The Holy Spirit revealed this to them by His Shining. Christ Himself is the Light of this dark world, spiritually. But when He came in His incarnation, and during the time of His earthly ministry, the world did not behold His glory in His physical person. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. But the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.

In Paul’s conversion, he was immediately changed by the light of Christ shining on Him, for he immediately acknowledges the One who had blinded him physically was the One who had opened his heart spiritually. Who are you Lord?, he says. Everyone who comes to Christ, has light shining in their heart. Their spiritual eyes are opened to behold the beauty and glory of Christ even though we cannot see him with physical eyes. Saul was 3 days without physical sight because of the glory of this light. But he now saw spiritually. His mind was illumined savingly. Everyone who comes to Christ also hears a voice, though it is not an audible voice such as Paul heard.

Paul was to become an apostle of the Lord Jesus, and as such, the Lord wanted Paul to hear his audible voice in this revelatory way. Paul was going to give us 14 books of the Bible that we now hold in our hands. The Lord knew that he would need to speak to him audibly. Ever since the apostles finished their ministry, the Lord has ordained that we not hear His voice audibly, but we do hear His voice speaking to our hearts through the gospel and His blessed word. The Holy Spirit accompanies this “voice” of the Scriptures with power and ongoing light shining in our hearts.

You, in your testimony, should be able to tell other people how you came to Christ, and even say something of how Christ came to you. You should become His witness to others around you of what He has done for you to save you from your sins and to give you New Life, eternal life, this wonderful life of knowing Him and walking with Him. You become His witness when you tell people around you what you have seen and heard. You haven’t seen Jesus with physical eyes, yet. But He has opened your eyes to the truth of your need to be saved by Him. The Triune God has shined His glorious light into your mind and heart so that you knew that you must have Christ to be saved.

You have heard His voice in the word saying – Come unto Me. You have heard His voice saying – If you are weary by your sin – Take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest for your soul. And seeing this light and hearing this voice, you came. And now He would have you to be baptized and learn to walk together with Him on the path of righteousness, all the way to heaven. You know that this is where you will meet Him and see Him for the first time, there, in all His glory. Let your heart rejoice to be His witness. For He is forever, your Savior, Your Lord and Your Friend.