



Pilgrim Home Baptist Church

NT 260 2022 • DECLARING GRACE • ACTS 22:1-29 • 7/3/2022

MAIN POINT

Salvation is the work of God, by which He draws us unto Himself and exchanges our story for His own.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most memorable testimony of conversion you have ever heard?

What is your conversion story? Why might it be unhealthy to compare our personal testimonies with those of others?

Every testimony of conversion to Christ is a testimony of God's grace. No matter what your specific situation, if you have trusted in Christ for salvation, God has miraculously transferred you from death to life. What makes the gospel glorious is not the specific sins from which we were saved, but the gracious, good, and merciful God who purchased us unto Himself. Today, by looking at the testimony of the apostle Paul in Acts 22, we will be reminded of how undeserving we are of God's grace and will be challenged to testify of God's grace to others.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 22:1-13.

Chapters 22–23 relate the events of Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem and his transfer to Caesarea. Acts 22:1-22 reports Paul's address to the Jewish mob in the temple courtyard—the same mob who, moments before, had sought to kill him. Paul uses this opportunity to share his testimony with the mob that orchestrated his arrest.

How does Paul describe his “former life” in verses 3-5 and 17-19?

Look at verses 6-11. How did the story of Paul’s life change?

Becoming a Christian is really an exchange—an exchange of your story for the story of God. How has the story of your life changed since coming to faith in Christ?

What are the learning points for you from Paul’s testimony that you can apply in sharing your own testimony with others?

Paul’s witness teaches us important lessons about sharing our Christian testimonies. A testimony should establish a connection with the hearers. Paul stressed how much he had in common with the Jewish crowd. He spoke to them in their own language. He emphasized his Jewish upbringing, his exceptional training in the Jewish law, and his zeal for the Jewish faith. Paul built a bridge of communication between his Jewish listeners and himself. Another way to build a bridge is by testifying to common experiences, such as the inability to cope with sinful habits, breakdowns in personal relationships, feelings of meaninglessness in one’s life, and others. People often respond to such testimonies by saying, That’s exactly my problem; maybe I need to pay attention to what this person has to say.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 20:14-21.

What task did the Lord appoint Paul to accomplish (v. 15)?

Why was Paul chosen for this task?

What do we learn about God from His choice of Paul for this task?

The Lord appointed Paul to be “a witness for Him to everyone” of what he had seen and heard. In other words, God appointed Paul to testify to the gospel. Paul was not worthy to be chosen for this task. In fact, he is the last person who is worthy to be chosen for this task as he had devoted his life to violently persecuting Christians. Paul was chosen for this task not because of anything good in himself, but because of the grace of God in his life. Paul made this even more clear when he shared his testimony with the church at Philippi.

Paul wasn’t seeking Jesus, but Jesus was seeking Paul. Why is it important that we recognize this to have been true in our lives as well?

How might thinking that we sought out God hinder our spiritual growth?

How has God redirected your life since you made the decision to follow Him?

What are some of the most significant changes your life has undergone?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 22:22-30.

Why does Paul's reference to the Gentiles (v. 21) upset the crowd, despite the fact that they did not react to his speaking about Jesus?

What was the real sticking point about the gospel for the Jews? What does this tell you about them?

How was Paul's status as a Roman citizen an asset in his ministry to Gentiles (vv. 25-29)? Read Acts 16:37-38 for additional insight.

With the word Gentiles, the speech ended. The thought that Jews and Gentiles could stand on equal footing before God was completely intolerable. The audience once again became a mob as anarchy and prejudice filled the air. Only the fact that Paul was a Roman citizen saved his life. Paul lived to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Some people live for themselves. Greed has become a popular motivator in our day. Others live for family. Some live and even die for the church. Like Paul, some modern Christians live for Christ, as we are called by Him to do.

What is one of the hardest things you have had to experience because of your faith?

If you're being honest with yourself, who do you live for most often? What is the danger of living for anything apart from Christ? What might we forfeit if we do?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you ever feel unworthy to be used by God to advance His kingdom? How might considering Paul's testimony help us overcome such insecurities?

When are you most tempted to put confidence in your flesh? What are some practical steps you could take to boast in Jesus instead?

PRAYER

Close in prayer by thanking God for the spiritual transformation He has brought about in the lives of your group members. Pray that God would continue to transform us into the image of Christ. Ask God to help us faithfully testify of His grace to the various audiences He has placed in our lives.

COMMENTARY

ACTS 22:1-21

Acts 22:1-21 reports Paul's address to the Jewish mob in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem, the same mob who moments before had sought to kill him. This is the first time he shared his testimony while he was under arrest. With the permission of the Roman commanding office, Paul addressed the crowd of Jews from whom he had been rescued. The people listened when Paul began to speak to them in their own native Aramaic. He shared his testimony with them.

22:1-5. Paul began by speaking of his life before he became a Christian. First, he noted his strong Jewish heritage. He was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus. Gamaliel was the leading teacher of the Jewish law (Torah) of his day. Torah studies consisted of learning by memory the written Old Testament law and the extensive oral interpretations of the law passed down from the great Torah teachers.

Paul emphasized his persecution of followers of this Way, Christians, and emphasized the intensity of his persecution. He had stopped at nothing, pursuing them even to their death. Paul emphasized his role as persecutor because it pointed to his Jewishness. The crowd had accused Paul of flagrantly violating Jewish law (Acts 21:28). Far from that, Paul showed that no one had been more zealous for the law than he. Paul rejected God through both religion and rebellion. You think you are good, Paul was better. You think you are too bad, Paul was worse.

22:6-9. These verses depict Paul's encounter with the Lord Jesus. Paul was journeying to Damascus to seek out the Christians among the Jews there (22:5). Just outside town he was stopped in his tracks. Although it was around noon, a light suddenly surrounded his party. Paul fell to the ground in awe at the heavenly vision. A voice from heaven addressed him by his Hebrew name, Saul. Jesus revealed Himself as the victim of Paul's persecution. To persecute Christ's church was to persecute Christ Himself. Paul wasn't looking for Jesus, but Jesus came looking for Paul. In the same way, Jesus came looking for you.

22:10-16. The second part of the Paul's testimony sets forth Jesus' instructions to Paul. Paul responded by surrendering to God. This time Paul knew that the Lord was the Christ whom he had persecuted. Jesus told Paul to go into Damascus and await instructions. Paul had been blinded by the light and had to be led into the city.

22:17-21. The final section of Paul's conversion account presents what happened after his encounter with Christ. Paul noted how Ananias came to him as he lay blind and waiting for the Lord's directions. Paul emphasized that the Christian Ananias was also a devout observer of the

law, a Jew who was respected by all the Jews of Damascus. Paul wanted the Jewish crowd to realize that both he and his fellow Jewish Christians were still faithful to the law.

Continuing his testimony, Paul described how Christ had changed his life. He returned to Jerusalem and prayed at the temple. There he had a vision. The Lord warned Paul that he must leave Jerusalem immediately. Acts 9:29 shows that the advice was well-advised; some of the Greek-speaking Jews of Jerusalem tried to kill him. The Lord knew they would not accept Paul's testimony about Christ.

Paul wanted to stay in Jerusalem. He thought that he would have an effective witness there. The Jews would have been aware of his reputation as persecutor of Christians. They would remember how he had participated in Stephen's martyrdom (22:19-20). They would know, therefore, that he was not a renegade Jew, a law-breaker, but the most zealous of them all. He thought he could be a powerful witness to the transforming power of Christ. The Lord had other plans for Paul. He would be Christ's witness to the Gentiles.