

“Telling Your Story: After” (Acts 22:17-27)
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When I was in high school, I worked at an automobile service station. Every day after school, I’d pump gas, do oil changes, and make sure the garage bays were clean for the mechanics. On Saturdays, I’d work all day with a friend, and we’d do a complete cleanup of the entire station so it would be ready for the next week of work.

One afternoon, I was pumping gas into a car when I noticed a young man walking up and down the street—just across from me. I recognized him because he was someone who bullied me in elementary school and was an all-around jerk. It became apparent that he was focusing on a motorcycle on someone’s porch with a “for sale” sign on it. A few minutes later, I watched him go up onto the porch, grab the motorcycle, and drag it up and over the hill—it had a chain between the wheels.

I knew that was strange, but I had to go back to work. A few afternoons later and after work, I walked over to the home, knocked on the door, and asked them if they had sold their motorcycle. They said, “*No, it was stolen.*” I replied, “*Yes, I saw it happen, and I knew who had stolen it.*” Apparently, so did the owner because after the young man stole it, he tried to sell it back to the owner. Not very smart, if you ask me!

After the police came and I gave my report, a month or so later, I appeared in court and stood before a judge and gave my testimony of what I saw. The young man’s lawyer tried to discredit my report, but I know what I saw with my own two eyes. The judge asked me a few questions, and the boy was charged with the crime.

What did I do? I testified as a **witness**. I told the judge what I had seen and heard. *It wasn’t much, it wasn’t dramatic, and I didn’t even know the complete story—but I didn’t have to.* All I had to do was tell him what I had seen and heard and leave it to the judge to determine if my testimony was credible or not. I was a witness to a crime, and my eyewitness testimony helped convict this young man.

That’s what I want to talk about today: ***Witnesses don’t need to know everything; they simply testify to what they have seen and heard.***

Pastor Paul has been preaching through the Apostle Paul’s testimony of his salvation, showing us how the Apostle had broken it up into three parts: *before Christ, meeting Christ*, and today, I get to talk about part three: *since meeting Christ*.

Returning to last week’s text, we read these words, “*For you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.*” Acts 22:15 (ESV) That word, *witness*, is the Greek word that means “*One who has information or knowledge of something, one who can give information, bring to light, or confirm something.*”

Now, remember the setting of these words. Paul is standing there, defending his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews who did not want Paul to testify about Jesus of Nazareth tried to set a trap for him and lie about him. They said he had brought Gentiles into the Temple and, therefore, had desecrated God’s Holy Space.

That was a lie, of course, but the intense anger of the mob would have gotten Paul killed—if it had not been for the Roman garrison stationed near the Temple. While they were beating Paul, the Roman guards grabbed Paul and took him to safety.

It was fortunate that Paul was arrested and bound in chains! Luke wrote that Paul was *bound with two chains*. That meant that he was handcuffed on both sides by a Roman soldier, indicating that he was seen as a dangerous criminal. NOW, at this point, most of us would have whined and complained about losing our freedoms and persecution from the authorities—but not Paul! He used this situation as a way to once again talk about his love of Jesus!!! No *whining*, just *testifying*! Paul took every bad turn of events against him as an opportunity to tell people about Jesus!!!

Then, Paul begins telling the Jewish crowd (and the Romans) his story about meeting Jesus. As Pastor Paul has preached these past two Sundays, the Apostle Paul makes the connection of his own life story back to Jesus.

Let’s jump into today’s conclusion of Paul’s testimony about Jesus Christ:

“When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” Acts 22:17-21 (ESV)

The beautiful thing about sharing your story about Jesus Christ is that even when your story has pain or trouble, God can bring good out of evil, and He can reveal the power of the gospel through it! But it takes courage, my friends! Today, I want to look at the courage Paul had in this situation to be a witness—and maybe along the way, we can all find some courage in our witness about Jesus.

Because Paul was faithfully following Jesus, he was involved in a riot, and the crowd began to beat him, and then he ended up in chains. It was a very violent and dangerous situation! Why is it that Christians today believe that if we're faithful to God, then our lives will be peaceful and calm? That's far from the story we see in the Early Church. To be a Christian in the Early Church meant you would be hated by the world around you! Paul showed incredible courage in order to share his faith in Jesus.

Remember that Paul had been attacked by his fellow Jews and beaten. Then, the Roman soldiers arrest him and put him in chains. His life was hanging by a thread, so look what he did! He looked for an opportunity to use this painful situation to tell others about Jesus. He appealed to the Roman commander and asked for the opportunity to speak to the crowd. You don't know by our English translations, but he spoke to the commander in formal Greek, and this impressed the commander.

When he received permission, Luke says that Paul *“motioned with his hand to the people and there was a great hush.”* That meant that he used an **orator's gesture**. What was that? It was a way to communicate that you were a public speaker and knew how to give a speech. Paul knew how to share his faith. He was used to doing so. Then he spoke to them in a language they could understand.

What Paul does here in the space of about five seconds is unbelievable! Paul went from being attacked by two different groups, almost being killed by one, to taking control of the situation and using this really bad situation to turn the tables and talk about Jesus! ***That took courage to share his witness!***

Paul was not panicked! He could have been killed at any moment, but he did not let his fear paralyze him. No! He used the gifts God had given him to take control of the situation and turn it around for the gospel. How did he do this? **1)** He kept his eyes *off* his present situation, and **2)** he kept his eyes *on* his mission of telling people everywhere about Jesus. That's it! He didn't let his circumstances control his life but kept his mission always in front of him.

How do you get this type of courage in sharing your faith? First, remember that having courage doesn't mean you have no fear. If you didn't have any fear, you wouldn't need any courage! *Courage is not a lack of fear but is doing the right thing even though you're afraid.* Courage comes when you look beyond your life and your present circumstances and look to Christ. Remember what Hebrews tells us? *“We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.”* Keep your eyes on Jesus!

Friends, if you really believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, was buried, and raised to life on the third day...then what do you have to be afraid of? Your sins are forgiven, and you have an incredible future ahead. What is there to fear? No matter what happens in this life, you are safe and secure in God's hands, and your future is secure! That's true hope, my friends! Just be bold and tell people about Jesus, the one who you love. But so many say, *“I don't know enough about the Bible to be a witness!”* Friends, ***Witnesses don't need to know everything; they simply testify to what they have seen and heard.***

“But, Pastor James, I'm afraid of talking about Jesus!” Real courage is not the absence of fear—but the presence of true joy—because nothing that happens to you on this earth will ever stop you. Paul wrote this: *“If God is for us, who can ever be against us? I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

What is it that makes your life meaningful? Is it your *health*? Is it your *wealth*? For Paul, his life meant one thing, and he clearly said so in Acts 20:24, *“My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.”*

Paul boldly told people everywhere what he had seen and heard about Jesus. He was a witness and boldly shared his story. Paul lived his life on a mission! First, it was to become as religious as possible (Pharisee).

Then, it was to destroy the Church and early Christians (Zealot). Finally, he met Jesus, and everything changed! His life now had real meaning and purpose—and he boldly pursued that mission with courage.

Years ago, I was on the Washington County Grand Jury. It was a six-week, two-day-a-week obligation that had case after case, day after day. We would assemble each day and hear testimony after testimony. Then, we had to decide if that case had enough evidence to go to trial. We did not have to determine the outcome of the case. No, all we had to do was to *decide if there was enough evidence to put it before a judge and jury*. **Friends, tell your story about Jesus and let them decide.**

I have to be honest with you and say that not everyone will want to hear the message of Jesus—or even want to listen to your story. But you'd not be alone.

What did Paul suffer because of his love for Jesus Christ? *He tells us he worked harder than others. He was in prison more frequently. He was flogged more severely. He was exposed to death again and again. Five times, he received from the Jews forty lashes minus one. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times he was shipwrecked. He spent a night and a day in the open sea. He was constantly on the move. He was in danger from rivers. He was in danger from bandits. He was in danger from his own countrymen. He was in danger from Gentiles. He was in danger from false Christians. He was in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea. He labored and toiled and had often gone without sleep. He knew hunger and thirst and often gone without food. He was, at times, cold and naked...all because of Jesus Christ!* Don't tell me you're persecuted because of your bumper sticker!

The book of Acts began with these words: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Acts 1:8 (ESV) When we have God's Holy Spirit living inside of us, we have everything we need to accomplish being a **witness** for Christ. ***The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the supernatural energy to do things that we can't do on our own limited strength.***

Friends, you're here because someone was a **witness** to you! I'm here because someone was a **witness** to me. In October of 1970, a young man by the name of Doug Bradley attended a youth rally in Windsor, CA, with his youth group. It wasn't the first time he had heard about how Jesus had come to save him from his sin and give him new life, but that was the night he believed. Three years later, in December of 1973, Doug shared Jesus' message with his new friend, Doug Rowland. That night, he, too, became a follower of Jesus. Six years later, I showed up at their church, and by this time, they were out of college and were serving as youth sponsors at my new church. Then, in December of 1979, I made the decision to put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. Since then, I've led hundreds to Jesus with my **witness**.

Friends, ***Witnesses don't need to know everything; they simply testify to what they have seen and heard.***

Life Level Application

- 1) Head:** Read the entire section about Paul's witness: Acts 21:27-22:21. What have you learned about being a witness from Paul's own example of witnessing for Christ?
- 2) Heart:** Read Acts 20:24. How would you answer the question: *“What is your life about?”*
- 3) Hands:** Write out your witness story. Include the **before**, the **how**, and the **after** to communicate your witness for Christ clearly.
- 4) Habits:** Be in prayer, asking God to introduce you to people with whom you can share your story. If you feel unsteady with your witness story, share it with your believing friends and receive their input on making it clearer. Remember, it's your story...and it's about Jesus! Be a witness to what you've seen and heard!