

The Conversion That Changed the World **(Reprise of Paul's Testimony)**

Text: Acts 22:1-15; Acts 26:1, 2

The last message in the Life of Paul series was *Paul in Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin*. In that message we talked about Paul being a man with a good conscience, with a presence of mind, and with an answer from the Lord. The people were upset that Paul's life was literally in jeopardy. There are three records of Paul's testimony: Luke's record in Acts 9:1-19; Paul speaking to the Sanhedrin in Acts 22:1-16; Paul standing before Agrippa II in Acts 26:1-18.

Today I am led to take us back to Paul giving his testimony to that hostile group (the Sanhedrin) as well as when Paul gave his testimony the third and last time to King Herod Agrippa II. We are going to go back and see what riled these fellow Jews into the frenzy. Paul's testimony was so convicting that Acts 26:28 says, "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

There is power in our personal testimony. The Tribulation Saints will overcome Satan and his forces by three ways. Revelation 12:9-11: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Although it looks harrowing for a while, Paul overcame through his testimony. In Acts 22:1 & 2, Paul captures the attention of the crowd and makes his defence. The word defence is translated from the Greek word ἀπολογία (apologia), which means an answer from a reasoned argument. The same word is translated "answer" in I Peter 3:15. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Let's look at five aspects in the answer of his testimony:

I. THE FALLACY OF SAUL

Acts 22:3-5; Acts 26:5

Paul truly was well taught in the perfect manner of his ancestors. He sat at the feet of the most esteemed Hebrew teacher, Gamaliel. Furthermore, he acted upon his bias and brought many to their death and imprisonment (Acts 24:14; Acts 26:9-11).

Paul pointed out that he, himself, was sincere, but sincerely wrong. Paul infers to these most astute teachers of the law that he is as educated in the depths and heights of Judaism as any of those whom he is addressing. Yet in rejection of the Messiah, Judaism takes a radical and sad turn from their roots. Romans 2:28 & 29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit,

and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” The New Testament Gospel is the continuum of the ancient Jewish faith.

II. THE FALL OF SAUL

Acts 22:6-9

You have no doubt observed that I referred to the great apostle by the name used before Paul’s conversion. In a very real spiritual sense, the Gospel changes everyone as promised in II Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Galatians 6:15: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Romans 6:8: “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”

This idea of a complete change through the born again experience is not understood by a lost world.

A. The Greater Light

Acts 22:6; Acts 26:13; Acts 22:11a

B. The Patience of Christ

Acts 22:7a; Acts 26:14

C. The Shared Sufferings of Christ

Acts 22:7b; Acts 26:15b

Matthew 25:40: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Hebrews 4:15: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

D. Salvation is a Personal Experience with Christ

Acts 22:9

III. THE FIRST TEST OF THE BELIEVER

Acts 22:10; Acts 26:10; Acts 22:19

Obedience is the first test of the believer. Paul said, “And what shall I do Lord?...” (Acts 22:10a). Obeying the light God gives you is key as seen in Acts 22:10:b.

IV. THE FELLOWSHIP CHANGE

Acts 22:11-13

A. The Old Crowd

Acts 22:11b

B. The New Crowd

Acts 22:12. Ananias represents the new fellowship. He was devout, having a good report.

C. The New Vision

Acts 22:13

V. THE FUTURE UNFOLDS

Acts 22:14-15; Acts 26:16-18

A. A Chosen Vessel

Acts 22:14, 15; Acts 9:15: "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," John 15:16

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

B. Stand and Receive

Acts 26:16

Robert Ingersol is humiliated by a little girl:

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus ye soldiers of the cross; lift high his royal banner, it must not suffer loss, From vict'ry unto vict'ry, His army he shall lead til ill ev'ry foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed."

C. An Illumination of God's Revelation

Acts 26:18

I Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Conclusion:

Christians of today should follow in the apostolic custom taught in I Corinthians 1:23: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness." Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

In light of this truth, let there be urgency in our presentation of the Gospel. Matthew 12:43-45; II Peter 2:21, 22.