

# What's Your Story? Testimony

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[0:00] Getting our story straight. Well, my wife and I watched a movie recently, and it was an interesting story. Story about a couple that was kind of in a mundane point in their relationship, monotonous routine.

And so in order to have some fun, they were going to go and pretend to be somebody else and meet up together and kind of rekindle this relationship in some way.

Going to have some romantic times. But as they did this, unexpectedly, somebody that they met in this encounter ended up getting murdered.

And so the two of them, having met at this place, had put on kind of a false identity. They checked into the hotel under a different name.

They introduced themselves as this person. They get to meet each other there with this person.

This person ends up getting murdered. And then they see this because it's on the news, and on the news is pictured the man that's been murdered at the hotel that they met at.

[1:18] And the picture includes the two of them. And so now it is the story, as the story's unfolding, it's unfolding in kind of a funny way, I guess.

Somebody got killed. It's not that funny. But it's kind of a funny way because now they're trying to justify to the police why they assumed a false identity.

And now as the husband is sitting before the police officer explaining himself, he is looking incredibly guilty. Right? And so there is this kind of comedic element to this, even though somebody did get murdered, after all.

I'm kind of sad. But so he's sitting there, and he's trying to concoct the plausibility of his story. And the police officer's just staring at him and just kind of shaking his head as he's explaining why he assumed a false name, why he checked into this hotel, why are you doing this at all?

And he's trying to explain it. As he's explaining, it's just falling apart. And as he sees it on the news, he and his wife are talking, and as they talk about it, they're coming to this point where they're saying, we've really got to get our story straight on this.

[2:35] We've really got to communicate this in a way that doesn't make us look incriminated. And so the story unfolds, and the movie wasn't worth watching in the end, and I won't recommend it, but that's beside the point.

But it made for a good start, because I really believe for us, this is really where we're at in a lot of ways when we're trying to share our story.

When we're trying to communicate about our conversion to Christ and our story as we're trying to share it with people, we're trying to share it in a way that is credible and intelligent, and it matches what the Scripture says.

I think for all of us, we come to this in different ways. I think for some, you've had a conversion experience, and you're so nervous about being misunderstood that there's all kinds of anxiety as you're trying to share your story.

The conversation always feels kind of clumsy. It's awkward. You feel it, and the people that are talking to you feel it. And you've really experienced something, but you just don't know how to communicate it well, and because of that, this awkwardness and this clumsiness communicates really strongly, and you don't want to share it.

[4:01] You kind of avoid the conversation because there's this anxiety that you have from time to time. For some of you, you don't know which parts of the story are important to recall.

For some of you, you're thinking through the story, and you're like, well, what do I share about my conversion that's important? And what do I share that's going to help somebody see this in my life? How am I going to communicate this in a way that I don't look dumb or look ignorant about the scripture in some way? And further, I think there are some of you that really feel a discomfort because you really haven't had a conversion experience in your life, and you're really afraid that in communicating this, you're going to expose the truth.

And that's the reality. I think there's a lot of struggle in trying to get our story straight. And I really, I think as you come to this passage of scripture, Paul is in just such a situation where he is sharing his story, and his story is straight.

He's communicating it in a way with confidence, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it becomes for us a model and a pattern for us to follow.

[5:18] The way that he shares his story is something that you and I need to take our story and try to conform our story to the way that he lays it out so that we can find the same effectiveness.

The whole reason that we have these pictures in the scripture for us is so that we'll learn from this story.

Somebody else is going to hear your story, and God's going to use your story to lead somebody to faith in Christ. In fact, what you see in the Apostle Paul is that his testimony is the platform that he shares the gospel from.

and for you and I it's the same way your story about how you have come to faith in Christ becomes the platform for you to fulfill the great commission that God has given you as a believer in Jesus as a believer in Christ Jesus you have been commissioned to proclaim Christ until he comes and in proclaiming Christ in that commission you have the tool of your testimony to use so that you can preach Christ from that platform and instead of it being the great omission of your life it becomes the great commission of your life and you fulfill what God has called you to do and be in Christ Jesus and so what we get from this is some clarity and if we're going to be a church that proclaims the gospel I think that's what we said that we want to be as a church in our little handbook that we put together we we said that there are some things that we want to be and one of those things we said that we want to be evangelistic right this is what we see in the scripture we want to reflect that in who we are and so what we've said is we want to be evangelistic meaning that we want that we want it to characterize us that we are that we're zealous about evangelism resulting in a thriving church in church multiplication and in missionary engagement we extend our community focus outward encouraging the growth of our church and its global impact through evangelism and missions for the glory of God I think that's a great statement I think that's exactly what we want to be and I think that for every believer in Christ Jesus because the Holy Spirit lives in you I think it resonates within you that you want to be that you want to proclaim Christ and if that isn't something that resonates in you that that's not something that you want to do and be it may be because you're in that latter category of discomfort because you've never experienced conversion to Christ and that's what we see in this example so what I want to do is I want to issue a challenge to everybody okay you like a challenge sometimes you do sometimes you don't it's like James it really depends on what you're about to say right but the challenge is pretty pretty simple I'm going to post online on our Facebook page a testimony worksheet and it's going to be for you to work through your story so that you can get your story straight I read an article about that just several weeks ago I'll link that to it too so that you can read through that and just try to help but what you can do is you can write out your testimony take that worksheet you can walk through it and it's going to take you through some of this passage and you can write out your testimony and I want you to send it to me and what I want to do is I want to do is I want to go through it and in a non-confrontational way I want to help you with your story because I want to help you get your story straight

I want you to be able to write it out in a succinct way so that you can see it for yourselves and I want to take it and I want to read through it and I want to send it back to you with just some notes just to say hey here's something to think about would you like to sit down and talk about this because I'd love to help you flesh some of this out and that way in a non-confrontational kind of way help you to get your story straight because this is the single most important thing about your life your relationship with Jesus is something that is the it is more important than your job today it's more important than your marital difficulties it's more important than the problems that your kids are going through today it's more important than the national crisis that we're seeing right now in the

presidential leadership and borders which those are super serious things and we need to be talking about those things but I'm telling you this is more important it's critical that we're not important that we're not important that we're seeing right now in the presidential election it's critical that we become the kind of church that's so clear about the gospel that we can proclaim it with clarity that's not just true of our church that needs to be true of you as a follower of Jesus and so we got to get this it's time to get your story straight and so let's do this and what I want to do is take those stories and put them in a book and call it the book of life and I want it to be out in the foyer when you come in you can thumb through and look at story after story after story after story of people that have been saved by Jesus changed by Jesus transformed by Jesus and if you don't know Jesus when you read through all of these stories it's going to make you beg the question why don't I know Jesus like that?

[11:22] and we can post them online and we can use it to send to other people to send to other people to send to your family and your friends so you can fulfill the great commission that you have received from Jesus himself and that's the challenge and so let's get into this today I may get through point number one okay I realize that the reason this story is important number one because it's difficult for you to appreciate what God has done in your life if you don't look at it closely and number two it'll be very difficult for you to fulfill God's purpose in making him known if you can't articulate what's happened in your own life it's fundamental discipleship so as we look at the book of Acts we're going to see the personal impact of the gospel on Paul and he's going to break this down in a way that's going to be super helpful for us so that we can conform our story to his so let me just explain that a little bit my mom you know she just had a stroke and so she's doing really good by the way she's not talking fully and sometimes it's really hard to understand but she's got a really sweet spirit about it so we just laugh a lot as she's trying to communicate she'll say a few words and she gets stuck and she can't say anything all she can do is laugh and so that's great but one of the things I had to do because she's living in the basement and it's not like a dungeon basement okay it's nice it's good but the stairwell going down is kind of an awkwardly curved staircase so it's really difficult for her to navigate and so you're saying so you've thrown your mother who had a stroke in the basement never to come up and you're going to throw food down to her no that's not how it works we're going to help her up and down the stairs but the difficulty is around this difficult staircase there's no rail and so so I need you know talking to the doctors physical therapists everybody you have to have a rail in there for her to get up and down these stairs and so I so looking into this a curved awkwardly curved kind of staircase is going to cost how much money you think right some of you are laughing already because you know it's like oh yeah good luck with that a couple of thousand dollars later you'll have a nice curved staircase so what do you do

YouTube okay so I go to YouTube and I look at some things and I realize I can do this so I take a 2x4 don't laugh I take a 2x4 I run it on the table saw I run some thin strips of wood from the 2x4 so now it's about 5 or 6 thin strips of wood and I take one and now look they're flexible now and so I take one of them and I run it down the stairwell on the wall and I find the studs and I tack it to the wall as it curves around down this awkwardly curved staircase and as I tack that on there then I take another strip and I put glue all across that and I take this other strip and I put it on and now I take my staple gun and I'm stapling it all down so now there's 2 layers of this and I do it again and again and again until I've got like 5 layers of this thing on the wall and it's just tacked onto the studs on the wall and it's perfectly conformed to the wall and I let it dry and I take it off and it's perfectly conformed to the wall perfect shape now I take some door trim okay don't laugh alright so I take door trim it goes around the door in your house and I take a long strip of it and I do the same thing I glue it and I staple it all the way down on one side on this curved piece now and then I take another piece and I glue it and staple it to the other side and now it's still perfectly conformed all the

way to the wall and then I cut off the end and I cut off the end and I sand the top and I paint it and I mount the brackets on the wall and now I have a perfectly conformed fits to your hand because the trim fits to your hand so that you can go down the stairs and it looks awesome you gotta come see it it was awesome okay I mean it's okay you'll look at it and go alright James wow kindergarten project but the reality is layer after layer conforming to the wall has created something with incredible strength it's not weak you could stand on this thing and it will not budge it's the same kind of layering technique that if you're gonna make a bow if you're gonna make a bow you're not gonna make it typically with a solid piece of wood you're gonna make it with layer after layer after layer and these layers create incredible strength for some reason your testimony is layer after layer after layer of different components that the scripture lays out for you that become an incredibly strong story that conforms to the scripture that enables somebody to take that testimony and it guides them down the staircase of the gospel and in order for somebody to be able to follow along they're able to listen to your story and hear your embodiment that's conformed to the story of scripture and now they get to see how they can be saved in Christ Jesus see this is what Paul's doing layer upon layer upon layer proclaiming the gospel through his story and so Paul actually believed that the world was gonna be changed by this story and it's not just because he heard the story and thought wow that's awesome but because he personally received Christ and the truth of the gospel was illuminated to his heart and mind and it changed him and so now it's not just his story but it's his story as it conforms to the gospel and enables him to now use his story so what do you need to do you need to take your story and make sure that it conforms to the scripture so follow follow his story so how did the gospel change Paul well you have to look back and so what he's doing is he's looking back and this is the principle that we're gonna cover today a couple more that we'll probably get to next week principle one a divine conversion in a divine conversion wait I didn't word that right okay so let's start over in a divine conversion

God compares compares my past without Christ in a divine conversion this is what we're looking for a conversion story in a divine conversion divine meaning it's from God conversion means there's a radical change I've been changed because of Jesus in a divine conversion God compares my past without Christ that's the impact of this story everybody's personal testimony has this component this layer of how I was without Christ so if you think of some layers it's gonna be how I was without Christ the wow of how I came to know Christ and then the now of how I've been changed because Christ is in my life and this is the layering that you're gonna see in Paul so in this passage we're looking at context okay because this isn't just our idea we're not just coming up with cleverly devised plans we're trying to examine what Paul did and as we look at Paul's example what we see there is that Paul is giving his testimony before Felix

Felix is a governor okay and he's given it in front of as it says Agrippa as you see in verse chapter 26 verse 1 Agrippa is kind of the puppet king for Rome he's a representative of the Jews he's appointed by Rome he's got all kinds of problems that's a whole different sermon the guy's got issues but he's he's giving this testimony before Felix he's given it before Agrippa he's just been snuck out of Jerusalem and the issue is so serious with Paul and with the Roman government and with the community that they had to escort him with 470 Roman soldiers that's how serious a situation Paul was in you think he's under pressure given his testimony maybe maybe just a little we feel pressure when we're talking to a co-worker okay he's talking to the governor he's talking to the king he's talking in the midst of chaos in the city 470 soldiers the scripture tells us in the verses right before this that there are also many dignitaries that are there listening to his testimony a military tribunal is there listening and the prominent people as it says prominent people of Caesarea so so there's just a little bit of pressure as he's as he's getting his story you think he wants to get his story straight

[21:21] I think he would and Agrippa agrees to hear him and this is really after two years of him being imprisoned Festus is another governor who's taken over for Felix and he's inherited the case because there's this huge case and it's a big deal you've got all these people involved and it's an uproar in Jerusalem that is now making its way to Caesar because as the scripture tells us right before Paul had made an appeal to Caesar and now it's very serious so much so that Festus is wanting to get some clarity he's just inherited this case he's got to bring the case to Caesar and if you bring this to Caesar in a way that's not clear he as governor could lose his job or at worse he could lose his head so he

wants to make sure that this thing is going to be taken care of and that he presents the case well so I want to get some clarity on this so Agrippa you come with me and I know you've got some Jewish connection as this representative for Rome and so let's sit down and let's listen to this testimony

Paul's turning the world upside down with this message of the gospel it's for the Jew first it's also for the Greek it's for the pagan Roman it's for the religious Jew and here's an opportunity for Paul to proclaim the gospel before the governor before Caesar before the dignitaries before the tribunal before the military God has given him a platform to proclaim Christ what does he share his testimony do you think your testimony is important oh man your testimony is important so how does he do it what does he say well there's a few component parts to this layer that you see in the text verse 1 and 2 Agrippa says to Paul you have permission to speak for yourself and Paul stretches out his hand making his defense I consider myself fortunate that it is before you King Agrippa that I'm going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently what does he do number one he's establishing rapport he establishes rapport there are pleasantries there are there are things that are polite that he's sharing as Paul teaches the Colossian church how to speak to outsiders he said it very clearly in Colossians 4:6 you are to let your speech always be gracious seasoned with salt so that you may know how you ought to answer each person the seasoning of your conversation to be winsome to be respectful he's establishing rapport he knows some things about Agrippa he knows some connections that they share and he brings those things out it's important for us to establish rapport it's not insignificant

Paul didn't just jump right in and just slap them with the gospel although he is going to preach the gospel and he's not going to shy away from that he is going to establish rapport then what does he share number two in this layer he's sharing his upbringing and heritage notice verse 4 my manner of life from my youth spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem it's known by all the Jews my reputation so all of his upbringing up to the point of his reputation and sharing his upbringing his heritage things that he would have in common with Agrippa in some ways but things that would help instruct that he's coming from a certain place in life he was educated in the Torah as a Jew in this upbringing he was taught the scriptures just like we see in Timothy when Paul is talking to Timothy and Timothy is expressing or Paul is expressing to Timothy how he was taught the scriptures by his mother and his grandmother

Paul in the same way in a Jewish household was taught the scriptures he would have memorized the verses of the Torah he would have memorized the Shema the hero Israel passage he would have understood the importance of scripture he would have been circumcised the eighth day fundamental religious experience was part of his life his observance of the Sabbath was something that was part of this heritage and from evening on Saturday on that Sabbath it's just the observance of the Sabbath is just a cornerstone of Jewish life dedicated to rest and worship families gathering on a special day for a special meal lighting candles reciting prayers reading from the scriptures this was his upbringing he's not coming from a religious vacuum he's got religious experience but that did not mean that he knew Christ that did not mean he was going to heaven when he died that didn't mean that he was right with God but it was where he was coming from it would have implied a certain lifestyle of prayer and worship because this is a daily experience for a Jew that's going to grow up in that line and in that lineage participation in communal worship at the synagogue was a regular thing dietary laws strictly observed festivals and holy days moral and ethical teaching talking about justice and mercy and humility the importance of caring for the poor and the stranger sexual purity all those kinds of things he's saying that this is where

[27:40] I was coming from and this was before I knew Christ this is before I had a relationship with God through the work of Christ so so it's part of your story people have to know that you have a context that you're coming from you're not a robot sharing your faith you're a real person with a real life you grew up in a certain way this is your background that's important to help people understand and it leads into your religious background verse 5 they've known for a long time if they're willing to testify according to the strictest party of our

religion I lived as a Pharisee for him there was a strong religious background for you maybe there's not maybe your family didn't grow up going to church maybe you didn't know the Lord maybe your parents didn't go to church on Sunday maybe it was on Christmas and Easter you come to church and those are the big Sundays you know you're going to go to church every other time it's like hit or miss not so for Paul this is important for him to share in a context where he is sharing

Christ with Caesar how important is it to share these things as you are proclaiming the gospel the strict observance of the law as he describes Pharisees were known for a religious rigor detail to the law they believed in a resurrection as Pharisees they believed in a resurrection in an afterlife they were the conservatives the Sadducees were not they were a little more loose a little more flexible no resurrection for them that's why it was difficult for the Sadducees to accept the gospel of Jesus a resurrection they didn't believe in a resurrection and that's why they were sad you see feel free to use that kids prayer and fasting

Pharisees were devoted in prayer in the times of prayer during the day the three times of prayer also in fasting we find in scripture that many of the Pharisees practiced multiple days of fasting I just put out that article Tuesday on fasting returning to the biblical principles of fasting it is a practice for us it's an important practice and something that we miss out on but for the Pharisee this was a regular thing two days a week full days of fasting during the week of not eating so that they could focus on prayer I mean we're talking about rigor and these were the ones as the conservatives they were the ones that would stand up to the government especially the Roman government they would stand up against the government when the government would intrude on their worship they would also stand up to the liberals and the Hellenization of their worship those that were trying to live more like the culture so they would they would be the ones to stand up to that movement and the intrusion and all those things they were serious and yet they did not know Christ and they were not saved

I think this is an important distinction for us to make sometimes especially because we live especially in this part of the country in a very conservative part of the country where we assume all Republicans are Christians and they are not I am not a Republican because I'm a Christian I happen to align with Republican principles because I believe many of those principles align with the truth of scripture and when it departs from that I'll be something else I'm not saying that if you're a Democrat you're not going to heaven but these days it's awfully close that's another sermon another time but this is that group they're serious but they're not saved what Paul is showing in his background is this religious experience and this strength of religion that was still falling short of leading him to salvation and this was important to share and then the next thing that he reveals in that part of the layer is his past attitude toward God and this is important if you look at verse 9 I myself I myself was convinced that in Jerusalem I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them we hear that account in the book of Acts and I punished them often in the synagogues tried to make them blaspheme his past attitude toward God he exposes something about himself I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing what was his attitude toward Christ what was your attitude toward Christ this is important in sharing your testimony your story needs to include those background elements but it also needs to include your attitude toward Christ because you are trying to show a comparison of where you were before Christ what was your life like before Christ what was your life like without Christ you have not always been a Christian when I talk to people about their story often in trying to get their story straight they think that they're doing themselves a favor by saying well actually

[33:51] I've always been a Christian and immediately when somebody says that I say they do not understand the gospel you cannot always be a Christian there's nobody who has always been a Christian there's not a single example in all of scripture of somebody that was always a Christian it's always somebody that is confronted with the reality of the gospel and sees what they are without Christ understands the gospel and is changed that's why we call it conversion you've been changed radically from something and you've become something else if anyone is in Christ Jesus he is a new creation the old has passed away and behold all things

have become new your past attitude toward God and the extent of a recognition of your sinful condition so past attitude toward God and the extent of your sinful condition because that's what you see in verse 10 and 11 it's not a glamorization of your sin but it is a recognition

I did so in Jerusalem locked them up put to death I punished them in all the synagogues I tried to make them blaspheme this is the extent of his sinful condition even to the point of raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities how far did his sin take him it's a question that you have to ask yourself as you look back because unfortunately for many people in the church when they try to tell their story they can't see themselves as having been all that sinful you don't have to be a persecutor of the church you don't have to be somebody that's putting people to death but you do have to recognize the extent of your sinful condition because your sinful condition is what the scripture says is what separates you from God all we like sheep have gone astray God has laid upon him the iniquity of us all all of our sin is what put Jesus on the cross it's the reality this is what Charles Spurgeon said he said if any man thinks ill of you do not be angry with him for you are far worse than he thinks you to be I thought man what a great description that ought to be our attitude when we think about our past sinful condition some of you may be tempted to minimize your sinful condition because you don't want people to think you were all that bad but the reality is your sin is what put Jesus on the cross that's bad that's the extent of it God is not unjust to send people to hell for that reason because if it is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth then what is the equal measure of punishment for somebody who rejects the infinite God dying on the cross for their sins what would equal this well you couldn't equal it the only thing you could do is be punished for eternity all day long in torment forever and ever and still never match up to what Christ has done for you so it's not unjust for somebody to go to hell we're all under condemnation because Jesus is the infinite sacrifice for our sin do you know your sinful condition do you know how bad you really are in light of the glory of

Jesus if you can't see the before you won't be zealous about an after in fact the before is in part what's driving you to proclaim him maybe you're not proclaiming Christ because you don't have an adequate appreciation for your past you don't have an adequate appreciation for what God has saved you from when I look at my life I try to share my testimony in that way I'm trying to conform it to that and so when I tell people about how I came to faith in Christ that's what I tell them my background my upbringing my religious experience what I thought about Christ and my sinful condition I was lost without Christ I grew up in a broken home we went to church off and on when I was growing up I heard the gospel I made a decision I got baptized a few times so much I had dishpan body all of those things and yet my religious digging I couldn't find Christ I finally came to a realization that I couldn't clean myself up I was drinking I was partying I was following the world I was doing everything the world did and I was so empty inside and that's when Jesus broke in that's my story you see this in stories in history of people like John Newton who wrote Amazing Grace right you hear his story of how he's the slave trader he's on the ship and he's the blasphemer that he is and in the middle of this storm in the middle of the ocean he it's so bad that he has to strap himself to the steering wheel of the ship he thinks he's going to die and as he's strapped to that and the wind is beating against him he's recalling the scriptures that his mother taught him when he was growing up and he gave his life to

[39:58] Christ in the middle of a storm and and March 21st 1748 this is the anniversary of his salvation he writes in his journal he said on that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters many years later on the same day date he said not well able to write but I endeavor to observe the return of this day with humiliation prayer and praise and on his tombstone says John Newton once an infidel and libertine was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved restored pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he long labored to destroy that's why when you're hearing the song that he writes it's amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me a recognition of his sinful condition and what Jesus has done to save him you don't have to be a slave trader but you do have to see a before or you won't be zealous about an after

Paul communicated these things over and over to the Philippians in Philippians 3 verse 4 he said I was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin the Hebrew of Hebrews as to the law of Pharisee as to zeal a persecutor of the church notice he's saying the same things he's expressing his testimony the basis of his ministry as he's describing for them but whatever gain I had I counted as lost for the sake of Christ indeed I counted I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ I know where I came from I know my past I know how I was without Christ I have something to compare that's the layer the reasons we see in scripture of sharing our past are important Paul shared it to the Corinthian church he said for I am the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God but by the grace of God I am what I am God found me in my unworthiness and it reveals his grace that's why I'm sharing my past it unveils grace to someone I recognize it myself it causes me to worship God but now as I communicate the gospel it enables somebody else to see the grace of God as it plays out in me you look at Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 2 and this is the way God's working with his people over and over again at this point he's instructing his people and you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 way 40 years in the wilderness that he might humble you testing you to know what's in your heart why because God found you wandering and it reveals God's providence in your life that every step along the way God was guiding you through a process to bring you to where you could see the cross for what it is so that you could see

Jesus for who he is and the work of Christ on the cross for what it is and seeing that you'll be changed it's his providential hand that's being unfolded in your past 1st Corinthians 6 9 Paul said it this way he said or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexual sexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunk drunkards nor revelers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and such were some of you but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God you have a past and it's part of the gospel story being unfolded so that people can see that you were found in your sin and it reveals God's cleansing power to them and now somebody that's caught in their sin can see your story and say guess what I'm caught in sin too what am I to do and then you come to Titus chapter 3 and you think man Paul's talking to a pastor here these guys have got it all together right and Paul reminds Titus and he says for remember we ourselves were once foolish disobedient led astray slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another but when the goodness and the loving kindness of God our Savior appeared he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy but a washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit why because he found me in my foolishness and selfishness and this reveals the divine intervention of God in my life it helps someone to see in my past that although I was religious or not religious whatever my case might be whatever my experience was God found me there and he revealed his intervention he spoke in the darkness and he pulled me out 1 Corinthians 1

[46:05] Paul said for consider your calling brothers not many of you were wise according to worldly standards not many powerful not many noble but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world even the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God what does this tell me he found me in my weakness and he revealed his power and when I share my past in that part of it it helps someone else to see the God who helps people in their weakness and shows his power so as you get your story straight this is the first layer let several parts to it you want to think through this where was I before Christ you want to get your story straight right you want to be used by God if you're a follower of Christ you want to and if you're realizing that you don't have a conversion story and this is to help bring you clarity and it's to help give you direction on what your next steps are sometimes you've had a conversion experience and you're nervous about sounding wrong and being awkward and this gives you an outline you don't have to be awkward you

don't have to be nervous sometimes you don't know which parts of the story are important to recall and this gives you substance so that you know the parts to share gives momentum and if you're one of those feeling discomfort because you really haven't had the conversion experience it gives you direction because nobody's always been a Christian the only way that you come is in a jarring confrontation in your past when you see Christ for who he is and your past becomes the backdrop of the gospel how you were without him a w tozer said it this way he said without God life has no purpose and without purpose life has no meaning and without meaning life has lost its significance and hope he's speaking to the despair that is this that Christ Jesus came to save sinners and that's you just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee oh lamb of God I come I come just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot oh lamb of God I come just as I am though tossed about with many a conflict many a doubt fightings and fears within without a lamb of God I come just as I am thou wilt receive will welcome pardon cleanse relieve because thy promise I believe oh lamb of

God I come hand them joy every Thursday our IC give you thank you get the key get the ■ the heart feel