

Paul's Arrest & Testimony - Acts 21:27-22:29

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[0 : 00] In the world of sports, often times teams are known for either their offense or their defense. An offense team tries to break down a good defense and score, and a good defensive team tries to break down an offense and prevent being scored upon.

And championship teams typically have both a good offense and a good defense. And believers in Jesus Christ, that analogy is same in true of the Christian faith.

And believers in Jesus Christ, we must be good at offense. That is taking the gospel to the ends of the world, proclaiming the gospel. But we also must have a good defense, and that is to be able to defend the faith, give a reason for why we place our hope and faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

Today is an interesting day in the life of Paul. He begins in Acts chapter 21 through Acts chapter 26. He begins the first of five defenses that he gives defenses of the faith. And so today we have the opportunity to read that.

[1 : 22] And if you have been with us, we're studying the book of Acts. We find ourselves today in Acts chapter 21. We will begin in a moment in verse 27.

But before we get there, I want to say that in the previous chapter and last message with Pastor Eric, I would say Paul was on the offense.

He came to Jerusalem and there was some misunderstandings about the nature of his ministry within the Jewish contingency of the church there in Jerusalem. And so James, the senior elder of the church of Jerusalem, encourages Paul to take this vow with these four gentlemen and to do these days of purification and things like this.

When he assumes that vow, he shaves his head and likely is part of the ceremony. And on the third and the seventh day, they were to present themselves in the temple.

And we're going to read back one verse in verse 26. This is the concluding verse of last week's message, chapter 21, verse 26.

[2 : 35] We read this. Then Paul took the men, that is the four men that he took this vow with, that he paid for, to fund this vow with them.

And the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each of them was given.

So he goes on the seventh day. This is the concluding day of this vow. And he goes to the temple, he offers this offering and there's this purification thing that he does.

And so it was the completion of that season. And so now he is done. And on that day, something very interesting happens.

And how I want us to think of this today is we encourage everyone. God's word implores us. Be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 33] And Paul does that out of faithfulness, fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ. He takes this vow, he strives for the unity of the church in Jerusalem. He does this thing.

And that faithfulness to the Lord leads to some things. And it is that same faithfulness to the Lord that leads to the same things for us. And so I want us to look at the text today and see what fidelity to the Lord, faithfulness to the Lord, earns for us.

It earns for us the same thing as it does for the apostle Paul. Fidelity to the Lord leads to persecution. We read in the second Timothy, Paul writes, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

And so let us look at this text and see and witness the persecution that comes out of Paul being faithful to the Lord. If you have your Bible, Acts chapter 21, let us now read verse 27.

27. When the seven days were also completed, the Jews from Asia seeing him, that is Paul, in the temple stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help!
[4 : 59] This is the man who is teaching everyone, everywhere, against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.

For they had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, with him in the city and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Then all the city was stirred up and the people ran together and they seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple and at once the gates were shut. And they were seeking to kill him. And as they were seeking to kill him, the word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

And at once he took the soldiers, the centurions and ran down to them and when they saw the tribune, the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains.

They admired who he was and what he had done. Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And he could not learn the facts because of the uproar and he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

[6 : 15] And when he had come to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd for the mob of the people followed crying out, away with him.

The ability to the Lord led to persecution for Paul. I want us to notice here the stirring of the crowd. Who did this stirring? Who is guilty for stirring all of this up? If you notice in verse 27, it says the Jews from Asia. So if you want to remember back to Asia Minor, the modern day Turkey, over on the Aegean Sea is this little province area called Asia.

And that's where you see Ephesus is on the Aegean Sea. So imagine in and around the city of Ephesus are those who are now in Jerusalem and those Jews see Paul in the temple.

And they are the ones who are stirring up this discord. Think with me, they would have been very familiar with who Paul was. Paul spent three years in the city of Ephesus teaching the Word of God, renting out for two years the Hall of Tyranus and teaching in like a little seminary in Ephesus.

[7 : 36] And you remember how that season at Ephesus may have concluded in the amphitheater there. Paul didn't go in, but they brought some of the people and they were accusing him. And so Paul leaves Ephesus after three years of effective ministry.

So the people in Asia would have been very familiar with who Paul was. And their accusation has two charges to it. Look with me in verse 28.

They saw him and they laid hands on him. So now Paul is in the temple, he's on the last day of this ritual that he has completed.

They lay hands on him in the temple and they say, men of Israel help. And they have two claims against him, two accusations against him. The first one is in verse 28.

This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people, the law and this place. Now if you're Jewish and if you're Jew, those are fighting words.

[8 : 40] Paul, the accusation is he is speaking against us, the people, the Jews. He is speaking against our law, the law of Moses.

And he is speaking against this place, that is the temple. Paul is being accused of speaking against the Jews, the law and the temple.

If you're a Jew and you're worshiping the Lord in the temple, those are fighting words. There's nothing about your very being that isn't being spoken against.

You're being spoken against as a person. How you live pleasing to the Lord through the law and this temple, the place of worship, everything you are as a good faithful Jew is being spoken against. These are fighting words. Second charge is also found in verse 28. Moreover, he has brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.

[9 : 44] In English, the word defiled is, the Greek word behind it is actually more forceful. Yes, it's the word defiled, but the word defiled is in the perfect present tense.

That is, it's not that by bringing a Greek into the temple did Paul defile the temple. It's that it currently stands defiled.

It's not only that he did do it, but it currently is defiled. And unless we ritualistically clean this temple, it will continue to stand defiled.

And so if you're a Jew, everything about you has now just been spoken against, and the very place that you are in the temple is now defiled and will still and continue to be defiled because of the act

of this man bringing a Gentile into the temple.

You can see that would be inflammatory. And by the way, bringing a Gentile into the temple is punishable by death. And so everyone is now in an uproar who is in the temple who could hear this charge against him.

[11:01] But remember, this is a lie. This is an assumption for, look at verse 29. They had pre, why did they say that he had brought a Greek into the temple?

That wasn't true, but what did they assume? Verse 29, they had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesian with him in the city of Jerusalem. And they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

So they have no evidence of it, but they just saw Paul earlier in the city of Jerusalem with Gentiles. And so they supposed that Paul had brought them into the temple.

I want to quickly show you a temple imagery. Some say this outer area is the court of the Gentiles. This is where Gentiles could be.

If you notice, there is a little tiny wall that surrounds just the outer rim. And some say the distance between that little half wall and the big wall is also the court of the Gentiles.

[12:08] All that to say the Gentiles could be safely here, but not in the temple courtyard at all. That was off grounds and the accusation is that there's a Gentile in the temple area complex.

What I find so ironic about all of this is this. Remember Paul, what is Paul doing? He is being faithful to the Lord.

He is observing his vow. If you go back and I encourage you to listen to last week's message, Pastor Eric did a phenomenal job of articulating how all this works.

But out of faithfulness to the Lord, he is seeking to support his Jewish roots and to unify the believers in Jesus Christ. Yet Paul is accused of not even caring about the Jews in this charge against him.

So the very thing that Paul is trying to do is say, I appreciate my Jewish roots. I am going to complete my vow in this temple. I'm going to do this for the sake of Christ and the church of Jesus Christ in the city of Jerusalem.

[13:19] Because there are largely Jewish contingency and the text reads, they had high regard for the law. And yet he's being accused of the very opposite of having no regard for the Jews, no regard for the temple, no regard for the law.

And the result, it says in verse 30 that all the city was stirred up. That is, there is a widespread disturbance over this now. And people ran together.

They seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple and at once the gates were closed. So now everyone has evacuated the temple because it is defiled. And they've closed the gates to the temple because it is now defiled.

And they have dragged him out. In verse 31 says they were seeking to kill him in the confusion. In verse 32 it says they were beating Paul.

So now Paul has turned into a punching bag. And this is getting pretty serious. I also want you to see how quickly he was spared.

[14:29] His life was spared because of something. Verse 31, this is the providence of God, the sovereignty of God. And as they were, verse 31, as they were seeking to kill him, the word came to the tribune of a cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

When you read the word tribune, you can think of that as a military commander. It's a position more than a name. We will learn the name of this man in a few chapters later.

His name is Claudius Lycius. We will learn his name a few chapters later. But for now we can just call him the tribune. Or if I ever say Claudius, I'm speaking of the guy who holds the office of tribune.

It says he's the tribune of a cohort, a cohort in the makeup of Roman military. A cohort is a group of 600 men. And it says in verse 32, and at once soldiers and centurions, plural.

So centurions are those who have command over 100 men. And so there's multiple centurions. You can imagine now 200 minimum men, 200 to 600 men are now racing toward the temple complex because there is a great disturbance occurring there.

[15:45] And to illustrate this, I want to draw the attention to this little structure out on the corner of the fortress here, or the corner of the temple complex. That temple complex here, this ground was built by all of this.

The temple was there, but all that grounds and that fortress was built by Herod the Great. Herod the Great was the same Herod that wanted to kill all children under two years of age in the region of Bethlehem because he heard that the king of the Jews was going to be born in Bethlehem.

And so to kill any uprising of a man who would have threatened to his throne, he just set out to kill a bunch of people, babies under two years old in Bethlehem region.

He's the same guy, he's known as the great builder, he built all of this complex. That fortress off to the corner there, his name is, the name of that fortress is the fortress Antonia, named after Mark Antony.

Mark Antony was the man who in the Roman world gave favor to Herod the Great coming into power. And so out of honor to the man who recommended Herod the Great get that position, he named a fortress after him, that garrison is called the fortress Antonia, and that was named by Herod the Great in honor of Mark Antony because of his position.

[17:10] Why do I make mention of all of this? That garrison is likely where the Trebun and the 200 men came from. This is, so Paul has been dragged out of the temple somewhere, and this is where the soldiers would have come from, it is a garrison of soldiers, and this is where the Trebun would have been, and so they would have rushed the temple complex really quickly.

They could have gotten there very fast. And Paul's life is spared.

He took the soldiers, verse 32, in the centurion and ran down to them, and when they saw the Trebun and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. So all violence toward Paul stopped because now Rome just showed up in force.

Then, verse 32, the Trebun came and arrested him and ordered him to be bound in two chains, much like what Agabus prophesied, the two chains likely being one set of leg irons and one set of arm irons or wrist irons for his hands.

He inquired as to what was going on. Verse 34, the crowd were shouting one thing and another, and Claudius could not discern what in the world was happening because he was hearing so many things and he could not make sense of it all, and so he said, fine, stop, let's take him back to the barracks.

[18:48] So now Paul is on his way back to the barracks, verse 34, and when he came to the steps, he was being carried, Paul being carried, because of the violence of the crowd and the mob of the people were crying out away with him, just as perhaps when Jesus was led away saying, crucify him.

In the same manner Paul is being led away saying, away with him, do with him with you please, please get him out of this place, just kill him, is the tone of the mob of the people.

Okay, why do I make mention of that? I think there are some applications for us here. Paul in exercising fidelity to the Lord, what does it cost him?

Paul was surrendered to the Lord, committed to his personal comfort or the avoidance of hardship. Here Paul probably knew that his presence in Jerusalem may have been not all welcomed, yes, by the church, but he takes this vow that was not comfortable, he didn't have to do that, but he did that out of faithfulness to the Lord, and he did that not to necessarily avoid hardship, but his faithfulness to the Lord, this is what it earns him.

And I think there's an application for us in this today, that we ought to be a surrendered people to the Lord and not committed to our personal comfort and not committed to avoiding hardship, that we're committed to the Lord.

[20:20] And whatever our actions are, whatever come that may, we are faithful to the Lord. Secondly, Paul accepts suffering and injustice as normative.

If we, this is the, he's returned from his third missionary journey, you can follow his first, second and third missionary journey all throughout his life. Suffering and hardship and injustice is normative for this man.

And we are not promised a life of lack of suffering and a life without justice, or a life with justice, we're not promised that.

Thirdly, Paul commits to doing what is right, and he leaves the unfolding circumstances to the Lord. Obedience to the Lord is contrary to the pattern of this world.

We need to do the right thing. We should not be surprised by intimidation or hate, or false accusations when they come our way.

[21:28] It's interesting, many Christians throughout the millennia have continued to be victims of hostility and lies. But this reality of hardship does not preclude the responsibility we have to obey

Christ and making the right decisions.

It's interesting to me when you go back through history in the early church, do you know that the early church was accused of incest? Why were they accused of being incest?

Because they greeted each other with a holy kiss. So Christians were labeled as incestuous because they greeted each other with a holy kiss. Second, early Christians were accused of being, of cannibals, of cannibalism.

Why? Because they took the Lord's supper, they took the bread, the Lord's body, and they drank of the cup, the Lord's blood, and that was this accusation of cannibalism.

Thirdly, they were accused of being atheists. Why were they accused of being atheists? Because they refused to worship the emperor. So early Christians were accused of incest, cannibalism, and atheism.

[22 : 41] You wouldn't want to be those things. And that was the point of these accusations.

Today, believers are often labeled as being accused of bigotry because of our views, because of our view that life begins at conception.

We also are accused of being intolerant at best, hateful, going further, because of our views of human sexuality, that God had created them male and female.

We, because of our views on marriage between one man and one woman, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

That same level of accusation continues to this day, of we being immoral, bigotry, intolerant, and hateful people.

And the list could go on and on, but we must be committed to making the right decision in the sight of God and let the circumstances unfold as they may. What is the right decision that is set before you today?

[23 : 51] Do it and allow the Lord to help navigate the unfolding circumstances. It was right and good for Paul to take this oath, and to take these four other believers and observe this oath.

But for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the unity of the church in Jerusalem and for the sake of obedience to the Lord, he did it, and there were an awful consequence paid as a result. Fourthly, Paul does not lose sight that a proper representation of the gospel is of more importance than his own personal freedom or his avoidance of suffering.

Trust God, never lose sight to represent the gospel well and right as Paul did, and that is more important than your personal freedom and the avoidance of suffering.

Oh, that we would believe that. Oh, that we would internalize that. Oh, that I would. Lastly, we continue. Paul then concludes this section, or Luke concludes this section, giving us a little bit of a transition before Paul gives his defense, verses 37 through 40, give us this transition.

[25 : 19] As Paul was now, keep in mind, he is, Paul is now on the steps. So I imagine Paul underneath Solomon's porch over here, somewhere over here, on the entrance to the barracks. He's on the steps over there somewhere, and we read this account. And Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, and he said to the tribune, may I have something, may I say something to you?

And he said, do you know Greek? Are you not the feet of the Egyptian, who in recent years stirred up the revolt and led about 4,000 men of the assassins out into the wilderness?

And Paul replied, I am a Jew from Tarsus of Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people. And when he had given him permission, Paul standing on the steps, motioned with his hands to the people, and when there was a great hush, he addressed them in a Hebrew language saying.

And before we get to what he said, let me share. Four years prior to this, there was a man who spoke Greek, who was an Egyptian, who had a shaved head, who caused an uprising that Josephus writes about, who is a Jewish historian, and he writes about this occasion, this revolt. And so what this tribune is, what Claudius is concerned about is, is this the guy? He is now speaking Greek to me, and is he this Egyptian?

[26 : 53] And once Paul, I says no, I'm a Jew, and he satisfies his curiosity as to who he is. And once the tribune, Claudius is satisfied with his answer and realizes this guy is not some revolutionary, he permits Paul to speak to the crowd.

So that's what has just happened. In verse 22, we read, now we get to his defense. This is again the first of Paul's defense, and you can think of this as Paul's testimony.

Let me read this, verse chapter 22, verse 1, Brothers and fathers, hear the defense. This is that word defense. This is the first of five defenses.

Brother, hear the defense that I now make to you. And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, so now Paul is not speaking Greek, but now he's speaking Aramaic, likely, and they became even more quiet, and he said, and so get the picture, and when you have Paul in your mind, I would have your in your mind's eye, Paul, he is now beaten and bruised. Perhaps his eyes are beginning to swell shut. Whatever your imagery of Paul is at this point, he has just been a punching bag that has been spared. And he is now in irons, leg irons, and arm irons, hand irons.

[28 : 23] And he is now motioning everyone to be quiet. Everyone hushes because he's speaking Aramaic to them in their language. They understand what he's saying, and they're curious what he says, and then he gives his beautiful testimony.

He gives a defense of why they should embrace Christ and his actions of what he was just doing in the temple. And this is what Paul says.

And verses, I'm going to break this down in this way. Paul first talks about his former zeal for the law.

So what does fidelity to the Lord look like? Number two is courageously proclaims the gospel through one's testimony, and here's Paul's testimony. He first talks about his former zeal for the law, verses three through five.

I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated the feet of Gamiliel, according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, and all you are, as all of you are this day.

[29 : 33] I persecuted this way to the death, binding and delivering prisoners to prison, both men and women. And as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear witness to me, from them I received letters to brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to those who were there, bringing them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

He says, hey, those who I'm speaking to, those who are zealous for the Judaism, for the observance of this law, I was just like you, just as you are, I was one of you.

I was zealous, and he says, and if you don't believe how zealous I was, how I brought with letters of extradition to go get those of the way, the Christian faith, to go get them, he says, go ask them. He says in verse five, the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear witness that this is true. Go ask them, go ask the high priest, go ask your elders, they can bear witness that this is true. I used to persecute people, just as you are with me, because I was zealous for the law.

And then he talks about his encounter with Jesus, verses six through eleven. As I was on my way, drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me, and I fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[31 : 06] And I answered, who are you, Lord? And he answered to me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting. Now those who were with me saw a light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

And I said, what shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, rise and go to Damascus and there you will do all that has been appointed to you to do.

And since I could not see because of the brightness of the light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came to Damascus.

Paul just communicated to the Jews who would just previously beat him. He says, I met the Lord. I had a zeal for the law that is the same as you, but I met the Lord and this is how he met me on the road to Damascus.

And we know the story because Luke has already written his testimony down in Acts chapter nine. And then Paul communicates his commission to the service of the Lord, verses 12 through 16.

[32 : 21] And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken by the Jews who lived there, came to me standing by me and said to me, Brother Saul, receive your sight and the very hour I received my sight and I saw him. And he said, the God of our fathers appointed you to know this will, to know his will, to see the righteous one, and to hear a voice from his mouth, for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.

And now why do you wait, rise and be baptized, wash your sins, calling on his name? And so that was his commission to the Lord that came to the mouth of Ananias who came to aid Paul in his

blindness.

And what I want to point out are four things or three things rather. Notice there are some parts to his commission that I want to point out. Number one, who is doing this commissioning in verse 14, it says, the God of our fathers has appointed you, Paul. This is who this comes from.

And this language is used with Moses' burning bush experience if you want to read Exodus chapter three. The same God who commissioned Moses, if you will, has commissioned Paul.

So when Paul would have shared this testimony, perhaps in the mind of the Jews they would have said, that sounds a whole lot like Moses. And in making this connection, Paul highlights God's marvelous grace. Did Moses deserve to hear God's voice and be used to bring out the people to freedom?

[34 : 09] No, neither did Paul deserve such grace. Did he deserve the privilege to proclaim liberty to captives? No, but both men were dependent upon God's grace.

Moses was, so too is Paul. Second, God appointed Moses to see the righteous one. Notice in verse 14, the God of our fathers appointed you to know his will. And what is his will? To see the righteous one.

God has appointed you, Paul, to see the righteous one. This, too, is an allusion to the Old Testament stressing the Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

That Isaiah speaks of the righteous one, the obedient servant who is wounded for transgression.

Paul is pointing out that Judaism rightly understood should culminate in faith in Jesus, the righteous one who Isaiah spoke of.

And again, Paul is perhaps using language that they would understand and say, this righteous one was told of old. And then thirdly, God called Paul to be a witness to the people.

[35 : 24] If you look in verse 15, for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. Paul would be, Paul would give an eyewitness testimony to the people of all ethnicities, of all social classes.

And as we are told in Corinthians, as he wrote right to the Corinthians of this thing, Paul receives instructions on how to act on his commission. And then he says, go be baptized, wash your sins, call on his name.

But I want to point those things out to illustrate as Paul is giving this testimony and is communicating his commission to the Jewish hearers. He is hoping they would understand this is not some fanciful thing. This Jesus is a fulfillment.

And this role I have as a proclaimer of Christ, this thing that I was doing in the temple is in keeping with your law, not in contrary, not contrary to your law.

Lastly, we see that Paul visioned for the temple. Now what's interesting, we know because of what Luke writes in Acts chapter nine, we know the road to Damascus experience that he just wrote about.

[36 : 41] But what is never included, and this is the first time in Paul's testimony, he talks about Paul's vision in the temple. He shares about his vision in the temple. Never before has he shared this, and this is what he says.

When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and I saw him saying to me, take 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 or another, after another, I am 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. And this was Paul's vision in the temple of his commission to go and speak to the Gentiles.

Now, imagine Paul concluding his sentence to say, and the Lord told me to go. I was praying in this temple.

I didn't come to defile your temple years before I was praying to the Lord in the temple. And the Lord told me in this temple that you just said I defiled, that I was going to go and I am going to send you far away to the Gentiles. At that, that's it. He just said the word. Did you hear it? Gentiles.

[38 : 16] And so what is their response? And this is next week's message. But what is their response? Up to in verse 22, up to this word, they listened to him.

Then they raised their voices and said, away was such a fellow from the earth, and he should not be allowed to live. Their conclusion?

Gentiles, unless they convert the Jews, we're thinking, Gentiles, unless they convert to Judaism, are unclean.

And this man wants to go reach the unclean. And this is the thing that defiled the temple. We're done away with him and go ahead and kill him.

Mr. Claudius, we're done. And that was the end of it. So I'm just thinking, what can we learn from Paul? What can we learn from Paul?

[39 : 23] I appreciate Paul's calmness. In this intense moment, Paul responds with meekness, gentleness, and compassion. He doesn't respond to anger. He doesn't attack. He reasons. He reasons.

When you are in a pressure-filled conversation at work or home or school, ask the Father for his peace and for his grace to speak the message of the gospel with gentleness and respect.

I appreciate. And we can learn from Paul's calmness. Thirdly, we can learn from Paul's courage. In the face of opposition, Paul did not bend. He stood his ground. Paul had such boldness when it comes to the Lord and walking with the Lord and proclaiming the gospel. He is so courageous. Many Christians can remain calm, but that's because they cave in and fail to speak when they are pressed. We need to be both acting in truth and in love. Only churches, and this is my prayer for us. Fourth, only churches that love people and stand firmly on the gospel against the winds of culture will have anything to offer this broken world. I want to be that church. Second, or I would say this, what we just read from verse 3 through 21 in chapter 22 is Paul's testimony.

[41 : 00] He's sharing what God has done in his life and when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus and what the occasion was. He called in the Christian world your testimony of how you came to faith in Christ, what that looks like.

And the ministry of Campus Crusade, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, encourages all of those who are involved in their ministry to whittle their testimony down to two minutes.

Some, they'll say as many as five minutes. And so I want to encourage us to do that. Can you share your testimony in two minutes?

And the reason for that is because I'm not going to listen to you for 30 minutes. And don't make fun of me. You have a hard time listening for me more than 30 minutes.

And here's my point. Few people have attentions longer than two minutes, two to five minutes. If you go longer, you are likely not listening. If you yammer on for 30 minutes, I'm yammer, I shouldn't say that.

[42 : 07] If you go on for 30 minutes, somehow your listening skills are probably compromised at some point. And your listening muscle is being atrophied. And so if the whole purpose of you sharing your testimony is for them to hear you, be mindful of what you're communicating.

One other consideration is if you talk longer for two to five minutes, you will likely get into some things that may be confusing to your hearer.

If you're sharing Jesus Christ with someone outside of the Lord, you may be saying some things that may lead to some confusion. Let me illustrate. You may incorporate things like you were at a camp or you walked an aisle.

You prayed with a pastor or you were asleep at night and something woke you up. And so the lost individual may be listening to you and say, boy, unless I'm woke up at night, unless I go to camp or walk an aisle, raise a hand, pray some prayer with someone.

There's no hope of my salvation. None of that saves. And so if you talk for a long time, you may actually say some things that lead to confusion. And what cannot be confusing is the gospel.

[43 : 25] What saved you is faith. Let me say it this way. It is the grace of God and sending His Son, Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, living a sinless life who died for sin.

Three days later, rose from the grave, lives to intercede for His people and will one day return and establish a new heaven and new earth where people will abide forever for those who have placed their faith in Christ in His sacrifice for sin.

That's what needs to be clear. If you have children in your home, I would encourage you to have everyone in the family write their testimony of how they came to know Christ and have that as a tool you can share with those who are without Christ.

I appreciate Paul's courage. He is talking to think of his courage. He was talking to a group that just was moments early on their way to killing him.

He was spared by Claudius and he says, wait a minute, before I get taken in, can I say something to that group? And he courageously says, and he gives him his testimony.

[44 : 57] He says, I was just like you. I needed the Lord and he found me. Last, we can learn from Paul his calling to proclaim the gospel.

In verse 15, you will be a witness to him, to everyone of what you have seen and heard. In verse 21, go for I sent you far away to the Gentiles and you say, yeah, Scott, that's true of Paul.

But our commission sounds much the same. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I've commanded you and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.

We too have this calling to proclaim the gospel. I'm grateful that today, Danny Sandberg is joining us. She has completed her missions training as this boot camp, if you will, a nine month long program in Mexico where they help individuals who feel the Lord is leading them to missions to the most unreached peoples, how to best be prepared for that endeavor.

And today she's with us and within the next calendar year, she hopes to be in that country, wherever that is, working among that people, whoever they are, proclaiming the gospel, sharing the good news.

[46 : 36] Because she has this calling to proclaim the gospel on her life. But that's not true just of her. I want to give you another illustration of someone in our church. Many of you know Rob and Lisa Fassette. Lisa recently, she was working at a company and she had befriended this coworker.

And the young man, he's 19 years old and this man just kept articulating all kinds of hurt. When he would open his mouth, he was hurt by his father. He has been hurt by life circumstances. He's been hurt by family.

He's been hurt by, yes, even the church. And as he was articulating this, Lisa would just give him a listening ear.

And one day, the young man was talking about, they were in the break room and Lisa and this young man were talking about what kind of music that they listened to. And the young man said, Lisa, do you recognize this song? Do you listen to this? Do you listen to this kind of music? And Lisa said, I did. I used to before I was walking with the Lord, but I don't anymore.

And then he asked, well, what kind of music do you listen to? And she said, well, I listened to some Christian music and he's, oh, you're one of those. Whatever was meant by that. And she asked, well, what do you mean? And the conversation led to what the Lord has done in her life and why she no longer listens to that music.

[48 : 09] And Lisa, though, was coming to a point where she was going to quit her job. And so she had submitted her two week notice in and yet she had a burden for this young man and did not feel that this conversation was over.

And so she went home, talked to her husband and said, hey, I'd like to give him my phone number so that should he want to continue this conversation about the Lord, we could do that.

And Rob was like, absolutely, and their kids. And so on her last day of work, she gave him her number and said, hey, if you ever would love to talk and continue this conversation about the Lord, I'd love to continue.

And it would be a safe place for you to share some of those hurts that you have. And I'd love, I'd love that. And he thought it was so weird and kind of didn't know what to make of that. And yet it was within the week that he texted her and said, I'd like to accept your invitation.

And since the month of April, every week, this man has been coming over to her home, to their home, and sometimes twice a week to continue the conversation.

[49 : 26] So this isn't just true of Danny going to the most unreached, it's true of all of us. And there are many other stories that I could share going on of where people are end purposefully.

What can we learn from Paul? His calmness, but also his courage and this desire to proclaim the gospel to those who don't know the yet the Lord, believing in his sinless life, his death for sin, and his resurrection overcoming sin and death.

And that gospel is a timeless message that saved not only these early Christians, but us today and continues to save.

So whatever you've, wherever you find yourself and your sphere of influence, continue to proclaim the gospel. Invite people in your life. Use hospitality. The summer is a great time in the Northwest to utilize to invite folks to come over and to or go to a park or go to the river or a lake for the purpose of continuing conversations to have about the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for Paul's example for his calmness, his courage, his calling to proclaim.

[50 : 49] Lord, I thank you that his faithfulness to you is an example to us that he was just going to be faithful to you regardless of what circumstances occur. And then regardless of those circumstances, he's going to make the most of them. Lord, thank you for his example.

Lord, I thank you for your word where you say, indeed, I counted everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

And for his sake, I have suffered the loss of all. And Lord, I pray that that surpassing worth of knowing you would also motivate us to consider everything as loss.

This is our prayer, Lord. Thank you for this beautiful day. Amen.