

Week of June 3-June 9

## **TESTIMONY TIME**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Acts chapter 22

One of the characteristics common to many churches is a part of the worship service where individuals are given the opportunity to share testimonies of God's grace and deliverance in their lives. Such testimonies can serve to bring glory to God, strengthen the faith of the church and build up the believers who are sharing their praises concerning God's work in their lives.

Testimonies, however, don't have to be restricted to the church setting. They can be shared in our day-to-day life with family, friends, neighbors and unbelievers as the Spirit prompts us. In today's reading, Paul has the opportunity to share his testimony with the mob in Jerusalem following his arrest. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of three extended sections in Acts where Paul's conversion experience is shared. The first occurs in Acts 9. This was the actual conversion itself and we looked at that in a devotional entitled, "More Unexpected." The second time Paul's conversion is detailed is here in Acts 22. The third time occurs in Acts 26. The fact that his conversion to Christ is mentioned three times in Acts (and again in Gal 1-2, Phil 3 and 1 Tim 1), implies that it was considered a major event in the life of the early church and a real testimony of God's transforming grace and power.

In his testimony to the mob in Acts 22, Paul first shares what his life was like before Christ. This highlights how dramatic the change was for Paul when Jesus met him on the Damascus road. Secondly, he shares the conversion experience itself. Finally, he follows up with his life after coming to Christ. This threefold pattern appears again and again in Paul's testimonials in the New Testament. One other pattern also appears. Paul always connects his testimony to Christ. In other words, Paul's story isn't primarily about Paul, it's about Jesus and His work in Paul rather than about Paul and his work for Jesus. Paul is very Christ-centered in his testimony.

Such sharing of testimonies can be helpful for unbelievers to see the truth of the cross in real life. Throughout church history, many of the great men and women God has used wove their testimonies into their messages to point people to Christ. Charles Spurgeon, for example, one of the greatest preachers the church has known, repeatedly shared in his sermons how God met him on a wintry Sunday morning in a church service with only a handful of people present. John Wesley was another who regularly wove his testimony into his ministry. If they did it, so can you. So, what has Jesus done in you?

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Have you ever thought through your testimony about coming to Christ? Take some time this week to reflect on your testimony pre-Christ and post-Christ and, then, write it down. Review it. Does it glorify Christ or you? Does it draw people to you or to the Savior? Is it too wordy? Does it overwhelm with details? Go back through it and edit the testimony until you know it and could share the highlights of your conversion in 3-5 minutes with the church family. If you're brave, pray also for the Lord to give you an opportunity to share your Christ-centered testimony with an unbeliever over the next week or so.

**Take-a-way:** *Testimony time takes place whenever we take time to testify about Christ.*