

PAUL'S TESTIMONY BEFORE A CRAZED MOB: A MESSAGE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE UPSET ACTS 22:01–21

Introduction

Paul's testimony will always hold lesson after lesson for believers of every generation. Note: he was giving his testimony before a crazed mob that had just been rioting, seeking to kill him.

- I. Paul's great love for his people (vv. 1-2).
- II. His former life (vv. 3-5).
- III. His conversion (vv. 6-11).
- IV. His call and commission through Ananias (vv. 12-16).
- V. His clear instructions from God (vv. 17-21).

I. Acts 22:01–02 Paul's Love for his People

Paul's great love for his people. Why would Paul want to speak to the mob screaming for his death (Acts 21:39-40)? Why would he not want the soldiers to simply rescue him and to save his life? The answer is his love and passion for his own people, the Jews.

Rom 9:1-3 I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit — I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.

Very simply, Paul was willing to face death to save as many of his people as he could. He had been saved, and he knew the truth of the glorious salvation found in the Lord Jesus, and he desperately wanted every Jew to know the same salvation. Note how the love and passion just flowed out of his innermost being as he began to address the crowd. And remember, they had just attacked him and were crying for his blood.

His very first words were, "brothers and fathers." He did not shout against them, did not rebuke them nor charge them with a crime. He called them *brothers* and *fathers*. The word father was the official title for the leaders of the nation, many of whom were present in the crowd. By using the words *brothers* and *fathers*, Paul was appealing to the closest relationship possible — that of a family, which in this case refers to the national family of the Jewish people. He was identifying with them, appealing to them in an attempt to reach them. At the same time, he was revealing his own feelings — the sense, the love he felt for them as the brothers and fathers of his people. Note that he spoke in the Aramaic tongue, that is, in the national language of the Jews.

II. *Acts 22:03–05 Paul's Former Life*

Paul's former life. It had been about twenty-five years since Paul's conversion. Although a few would have known about Paul's past, many in the crowd had no idea who he was.

1. He shared his roots, his personal heritage, that is, the privileges and advantages of his genealogy.
 - => He was a Jew: not a foreigner, but as much a Jew as any of his listeners. He had been born a Jew.
 - => He was born in Tarsus but brought up in Jerusalem so that he could be educated at the feet of Israel's greatest teachers. He was brought to Jerusalem while still very young for the purpose of securing the very best education (see Acts 26:4).
 - => He was educated in the strictest law of the fathers (teachers). Paul had actually been a Pharisee, one of a small sect of men who had totally dedicated their lives to nothing but living out the law (see *Sadducees*, Acts 23:8).
 - => He was zealous for God in keeping the law, as zealous as any Jew. Note: this is a critical point in understanding Paul. He claimed to have never forsaken the practice and customs of the Mosaic law, not personally. He was as much a practicing Jew in keeping the law and customs as any of his audience.
2. Paul shared the early part of his life which was hostile against Christianity (see notes, Acts 8:1-4; esp. 8:1; 8:3; 9:1-2).

III. *Acts 22:06–11 The Conversion of Paul*

Paul's conversion. The point to note is Paul's claim: he claimed to have been saved by the Lord alone, by a personal confrontation with Him. Paul described the event exactly (see note, Acts 9:3-9). The new facts presented by Paul in this account are as follows.

- => His conversion took place "about noon" (v. 6).
- => The words "of Nazareth" are mentioned in the event. By saying that Jesus, the despised Nazarene, was the Lord of heaven is striking.
- => The men with him saw the light and heard a voice speaking, but they could not understand the words (v. 9).
- => The brilliance of the light was the cause of Paul's blindness (v. 11).

Thought 1. Paul had just covered his former life which included...

- a great personal heritage in which he boasted.
- a great zeal in persecuting the church, priding himself in his zeal, thinking he was pleasing God.

He had shared his conversion to Christ which focuses upon a brilliant light that struck him blind. He was stricken physically blind as a symbol to show that he was *spiritually blind*.

Mat 18:3 *And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*

John 12:35 *Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going."*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

Eph 5:14 *This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper; rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

IV. Acts 22:12–16 Paul's Call and Commission

Paul's call and commission through Ananias. Paul covered both Ananias' character and his own commission in these verses.

1. Ananias' character was above reproach. He never would have done anything of a questionable nature, never would have helped Paul if Paul had been an evil man.
 - => Ananias was a devout man, that is, a God-fearing man, living by the law of Moses and God.
 - => Ananias was a reputable man, highly esteemed by all the Jews of Damascus.
 - => Ananias was a true minister, a true servant sent to help Paul when Paul so desperately needed help. Note he called Paul *brother* and healed his eyes!
 - => Ananias was the messenger of God sent to set Paul apart for God's work.
2. Paul's call and commission to serve God. Paul spelled out exactly what God had called him to do. Note how the emphasis was upon Paul knowing, seeing and hearing God personally before he was to reach out to others. This is true with every believer. God expects the believer to *know* Him first, no matter who the believer is or how important the mission of the believer is. Paul spelled out exactly what God called him to do.
 - a. To know God's will: His person, His salvation, His sanctification, His mysteries, His revelation, His commandments — all that is involved in the will of God.
 - b. To see the Righteous One: the Messiah, the Son of God Himself, the Sinless One, the Just One.
 - c. To hear the voice of the Righteous One: knowing Him personally, fellowshiping with, praying and sharing with, being guided and directed by, being instructed by.
 - d. To be a witness for the Righteous One to all men (see note and *Witnessing*, Acts 1:8; 9:15-16).

- e. To be baptised (see *Forgiveness*, Acts 2:38).

Thought 1. The same five points are applicable to the call of every believer. Every believer must know, see and hear the Righteous One in his heart and life by faith; and he must bear witness to the Lord and be baptised.

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (see Mt. 20:28; Lk. 19:10)

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Phil 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Rev 3:2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

Isa 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”

V. Acts 22:17–21 Paul's Call and Mission

Paul's clear instructions from God through a vision. This event happened about three years after Paul's conversion (Acts 9:26-29; see Gal 1:18-19). Note four points.

1. Paul was in prayer when the trance came — so lost, so gripped with concern for his people and their hostility toward him that he lost all sense of the world around him. He was swallowed up in the thoughts of God, transported mentally out of this world (see note, pt. 3, Acts 10:9-22). Note: Paul saw Christ in the trance.
2. The Lord's will was for Paul to get out of Jerusalem. The Jews were seeking to kill him because he was preaching Christ (see notes, Acts 9:26-28; 9:29-30).
3. The argument of Paul against the Lord. Paul felt he was especially qualified to reach the Jews. He had been the arch-persecutor of Christianity, so he felt the Jews would believe him, knowing about his past. They would know that he never would have been converted from such bitter hatred unless he had really seen Christ. But Paul was wrong. The Jews felt he was a traitor.
4. The Lord's command to Paul was emphatic: go! Paul's mission was not at home; it was elsewhere — to the Gentiles.

Thought 1. Note four points.

- 1) A man is to fulfil his call, no matter what it is.

- 2) A man cannot always serve where he wishes.
- 3) A man is not always accepted by those for whom he cares.
- 4) When the Lord tells a man to go, he needs to go!

Thought 2. Note how Paul was making the same mistake made twenty-five years earlier, still trying to win the Jews over.

Thought 3. Too many try to *stay at home* when the Lord has called them to depart and go.

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* (see Lk.19:10)

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* ■