

## A Testimony of a Changed Life

Scripture is clear that Jesus wants all who know him to be a witness for him (e.g., Acts 1:8). As his witnesses, we are to share what we have seen and heard about Jesus. In our passage today we come to a section of Acts where Luke begins to present an extended treatment of Paul's appearances in various courts to make his defense in Jerusalem, Caesarea and eventually all the way to Rome. This all begins when a chaotic scene arising in the temple when a mob tries to kill Paul. Beaten and bloodied, Paul asks to speak to his Jewish brothers. What is on his heart at this moment is to share his testimony of a changed life in hopes that some among them will believe. Let's consider what this passage might teach us about being witnesses for Jesus.

### Read Acts 21:27-22:22

1. Why do you think Paul was so determined to speak to the mob who had tried to kill him?
2. How does Paul describe who he was and what was important to him before he met Jesus?
3. When Paul encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus (22:10, 14) as well as three years later when he falls into a trance in the temple (22:17-18), what does Jesus communicate to Paul about his calling?
4. Why was it so offensive to the Jews that Paul was called to go to the Gentiles?
5. Why do you think that in this situation Paul decided to tell his own story of meeting Jesus rather than preach a sermon as we see him doing in other places in Acts?
6. One of the things that makes personal stories so powerful is that they can demonstrate how Jesus changes lives. As you think about your own story, can you articulate specific ways that Jesus has changed your life? What are they?

Brian said:

From Paul's story we understand that **no one is too far from God to be saved**. Paul was a violent persecutor of the church. His actions led directly to the death of at least some believers. Others were thrown in jail. And yet, he was saved. Jesus changed his life. Who in your life seems too far from God to be saved? Whose life seems so opposed to God that you can't imagine they would ever worship and follow Jesus? Paul's story reminds us that no one is too far from God to be saved. And so, don't give up on anyone regardless of how unlikely it seems that they will come to Christ. Keep persisting in prayer for your friend, child, neighbor. Keep loving them and finding relevant ways to share Jesus with them.

7. Do you have someone in your life that you tend to think is too far from God? How does Paul's experience encourage you?

Brian said:

Paul's testimony here to his Jewish brothers demonstrates that **love must be what drives our actions**. One of the things I've reflected on in this passage is why Paul wanted to talk to the mob? They had tried to kill him when Paul had done nothing wrong. He had simply been in the temple fulfilling a Jewish ritual when the mob attacks him. If I was Paul, I would be done with them. But not Paul. He wants to share his testimony of how Jesus changed his life. Why? Love. Paul loved these people. He cared deeply about the Jewish nation. Do you have love in your heart for the people around you who don't know Jesus? Or would you have to admit that honestly you don't really care much about them? I have no doubt that if I had a deeper love in my heart for the people around me who don't know Jesus, I would pray for them with more fervor and I would find more ways to get with them to talk with them and serve them in hopes that God might open up a door to talk about him. Love is what leads to these kinds of things.

8. When it come to our efforts to witness for Jesus (Acts 1:8), why must love be what drives our actions?
9. Likely, we all sense that we have room to grow in our love for those in our lives who don't know Jesus. What can help us grow in our love for those who are far from God?