

Intro. Like last time, I want to point your attention to a testimony of someone you probably know. He was raised in a strong Christian home & his parents regularly taught him about the Bible, his sin & his need for Christ. Moreover, he was in a solid church at First Baptist Jacksonville which weekly highlighted the gospel. Not only did he give his life to the Lord as a youth, but he went on his first overseas mission trip at age 15 & met a kid who was born with backward feet. The teen got to carry the boy around & show him the love of Christ. After a successful collegiate career for the University of Florida football team, he played for the NFL, winning a playoff game for the Denver Broncos. He has commented on college football games and now is pursuing Major League Baseball through a stint with the New York Mets organization. Of course, it’s Tim Tebow & doctors encouraged his mother to abort Tim because they thought he would have some abnormalities—he’s one of the greatest witnesses for Christ today & had his parents listened to the doctors, he wouldn’t be around. Today we look at Acts 23 in our “Missions 401: To the End of the Earth” series & we focus on “Your Personal Testimony & the Hope of the Resurrection.”

Theme: Christian doctrine & testimony

Background: Paul concluded his 3rd missionary journey of preaching Christ in new places, often focusing on major cities. Once he returned to Jerusalem, he was captured, beaten, tried & kept in custody.

Homework from Last Week:

- Before we go too far, I need to go over your homework from last time. Last time I asked you to write out your personal testimony & try to keep it under 2 minutes. You would then share it this week in worship service. Now if you weren’t here last week and you didn’t know anything about it, you may get asked to listen to someone share his/her, but you are given a “pass” unless you want to share it. The 4 main areas of one’s testimony is describing what your life was like apart from the Lord, how you knew you needed the Lord, how you trusted the Lord & what your life has been like since following the Lord. One lady who knew last week she would be out-of-town this weekend actually emailed me her personal testimony & it’s a wonderful story. So I’m going to give you a few minutes to share with someone next to you your personal testimony. After a couple of minutes, we will switch & let them tell you your story.

Overview of Narrative:

- After Paul’s arrest, the Jewish council began to question Paul & he testified of his life before God in a good conscience. The high priest commanded Paul to be struck & Paul said he would be struck for his false judgment. When Paul learned he was the high priest, Paul refused to speak anymore evil of leaders (Christians would do well to not speak evil of leaders—while I spoke against Trump before he became President, I have prayed for him & encouraged others to support his policies now that he is our President & I believe he has made some helpful decisions, but he still has a long way to go over the next 4 years).
- When Paul realized the council was split between Pharisees & Sadducees, he identified himself as a Pharisee & pointed to his hope in the resurrection for his trial. The Pharisees, who believe in the resurrection & spirits & angels, supported Paul, but the Sadducees were against him, because they deny all those doctrines.
- Paul was returned to the barracks & Jesus affirmed to Paul that he would testify in Rome, just like he had testified in Jerusalem.
- Paul’s nephew became aware of a Jewish plot to murder Paul & made it known, so Paul was taken in the middle of the night to Caesarea to be kept safe (I wonder if those 40 men who agreed not to eat until Paul was killed ever broke their vow) & given a fair trial

- The heart of Paul’s mission was the gospel & the heart of the gospel is the death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because so many Christians have trouble summarizing the gospel, I want to do that for you today—because it’s what Paul shared.
 - 2 ways to share the gospel (like last time)—one’s an outline to tell a story & the other is a visual to show the story. **When you share the gospel, relate 4 key truths of the Gospel:**
 - 1. God is Creator & He is holy (Isaiah 6:3)—He is perfect & transcendent**
 - When you begin with a holy God, you focus on the greatness & perfection & transcendence of God—He is far above us & pure & without sin
 - Both the Old & New Testaments underscore the holiness of God more than His other characteristics (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8)
 - 2. Mankind is sinful & separated from God (Romans 3:23)—he is dead, blind, lost**
 - By starting with God’s holiness, you help people see how sinful they really are—they are dead in their sins (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1), they are blind in their sins (2 Corinthians 4:4) & they are lost in their sins (Luke 15:24; 19:10)
 - Man’s sin means he is in a hopeless situation—he cannot save himself, he cannot see the light, he cannot find his way
 - 3. God sent Jesus Christ His Son out of love as the only remedy for our sin problem (John 3:16)—through His crucifixion & resurrection**
 - No one has ever been the answer for man’s sin problem except Jesus Christ—God sent Him out of love (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). He is the only way to the Father in heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
 - He is unique because of His crucifixion in the place of sinners & He rose from the dead to prove He is the Lord, the Son of God. His work is sufficient to save us—nothing more is needed
 - 4. Man must repent from sins & trust in Jesus Christ to be declared right with God (Romans 3:25)**
 - God has given us a great gift in Jesus Christ, but we must receive Him in order for His death to affect our lives—we do that through repentance from sin, on the one hand, & through faith in Christ, on the other hand
 - Such repentance & faith is conversion & the moment we believe, God declares us right with Him, because He places us in Christ, with Whom He is always pleased
- Visual:** shows pics of Scripture references & God is holy (pic 1) & He is separate from man, who is sinful (pic 2). God sent Jesus who was holy, to take on our sin (pic 3). When a sinner trusts in Jesus, God transfers Christ’s righteousness to him (pic 4).
- I’ve given you 2 more ways to share your faith—through a simple outline on the 4 key truths of the gospel & a visual that covers these 4 key truths. Will you share this message with others this week?
- Conc.** A man grew up in a church family’s home in the early 17th century in England. His mother passed away when he was 16 & he was drafted into the Parliamentary Army to overthrow King Charles I. Though he was given a Bible & a catechism & expected to attend religious services, they had no effect on him. He got married but still enjoyed everything but Christ. He was even impressed to think of Christ speaking to him: “Will you leave your sins & go to heaven or have your sins & go to hell?” He was willing to keep his sins. After having a child in sick condition, he tried to be a good provider for his family & care for others. He met a few poor women discussing the things of God & he was so moved by it, he began meeting with them often. Shortly thereafter, he met with a few other Christians & they started an independent church & called a pastor. The pastor counseled him in the wickedness of his heart & he saw it & found Christ to be the only payment for his sin & received God’s grace in Christ. He was baptized, joined the church, became a deacon a couple of years later & then a great preacher & writer. Outside of the Bible, the 2nd most read book in the English language is his *Pilgrim’s Progress*. John Bunyan was a great servant of the Lord, but he had to give up his sins & receive God’s grace in Christ. What about you? Would you be willing to give up your sins & receive God’s grace in Jesus Christ so you can be saved? He was crucified for your sins & risen from the dead & he is the hope of the world.