

“This Is My Story”

Acts 22:3-16

Introduction:

- 1) **Paul’s Testimony.** Very briefly summarize what you just read from Acts regarding the Apostle Paul’s life.
- 2) **Your Testimony.** In 3-5 minutes, share your own testimony with your people. They may have heard it before, but they need to hear it again.
- 3) **Their Testimony?** Your people have now heard the powerful story of what God did in Paul’s life. They’ve heard the powerful story of what God has done in your life. Challenge them now to begin thinking about their own story—what God has done in their lives—because their story is just as powerful as what they’ve heard.

Thesis:

People love to hear miraculous stories—stories of how the normal course of events was changed by some sort of mysterious outside influence. Whether they are hearing of “Angels in the Outfield” or an unexpected harvest or an unexplainable healing, people listen intently to the stories of miracles.

Every personal testimony about how Almighty God reached down in Jesus Christ to rescue a lost and dying sinner is powerful. It’s the story of a miracle. God invaded human history to capture you, so your story is worth telling. You’re a miracle. People want to hear your story. They just might not know it yet

1) Acts 22:3-5 – “Paul’s Life Before Christ”

In these verses, the Apostle Paul talks about his life before he trusted Christ. Notice what Paul says and how he says it:

- 1) **What he says:** He is honest about who he was before Christ. He doesn’t pull any punches. He doesn’t gloss over the truth of who he used to be. He was a sinner, separated from God by his sin, persecuting the people of God in his unrighteousness, and endorsed by the enemies of Christ to carry out their wicked desires.
- 2) **How he says it:** In addition to being honest, he’s also brief. He doesn’t glorify his former way of life. He doesn’t bask in the sinful splendor of his life before Christ. He tells the truth about who he used to be honestly and quickly, and then he moves on to more important matters.

Illust.) **Extravagant B.C. Stories Not Needed.** Have you ever heard people share their testimonies who spent the majority of their time talking about who they were before they gave their lives to Jesus? [Share personal recollection here.] What did you notice about that story? More attention is given to the sin than to the Savior! We don’t want people to leave the conversation saying, “Wow, they were really bad!” We want them to leave saying, “Wow, Jesus is really powerful!”

Tip) **Keep It Simple.** You don’t have to air all of your dirty laundry before people for them to get the point that you were a sinner headed to hell. Try summarizing your sinfulness by comparing your life to the standard of God’s Ten Commandments. “God commanded us to honor our fathers and mothers, and I haven’t always done that. God commanded us not to bear false witness against our neighbors, and I’ve gossiped. God commanded us not to steal, and I’ve stolen. God commanded us to be content with what we have and not to be jealous of other people’s stuff, but I’ve been jealous. Most importantly, God commanded us to give Him first place in our lives, and there have been many times when many other things have been more important to me than God.” When we see ourselves compared to the standard by which we’ll be judged, the reality of our sinfulness becomes very clear.

Sum) In telling your story, be honest about who you were before you met Christ. But be brief with this part—it’s the part that’s been washed away by the blood of Jesus!

2) Acts 22:6-13 – “Paul’s Conversion”

In these verses, the Apostle Paul recounts the miraculous story of his conversion to Christ. Notice, again, what he says and how he says it:

- 1) **What he says:** He tells the story of his conversion. While on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus, Paul is miraculously stopped by a great light that surrounds him and blinds him. Out of the light comes the voice of Jesus Himself, and Jesus instructs him in what he must do. Paul believes and surrenders his life to Christ right then and there. In the span of a few moments, Paul’s life has changed for all eternity. He has passed from spiritual death into spiritual life. He has gone from being a sinner who persecuted the church of Jesus Christ, to being a saint who serves the church of Jesus Christ. In an overwhelming instant, he was saved, adopted into the family of God, forgiven of all of his sin, and set on a trajectory of following Christ for the rest of his life.
- 2) **How he says it:** Who gets the credit in this story? Does Paul credit his extensive theological education, his Jewish upbringing and pedigree, or some sort of “sixth sense” regarding the things of God? No. Paul makes sure that Jesus is the hero of his story, because Jesus really is the hero of the story. Jesus did the stopping, the speaking, and the saving. Paul was the beneficiary of Jesus’ work.
- Illus.) **You Didn’t Save Yourself.** The Bible is very clear that “none is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God” (Romans 3:10-11). You didn’t wake up one morning and decide that you would grace God with your faith. You were headed to Hell as fast as you could, and God put an old rugged cross right in your path. He may not have knocked you down and struck you temporarily blind, but He rescued you from your sinful self and pulled you to eternal life in Him.

When you tell of your conversion, make sure Jesus gets the credit. He is the Savior; you are the saved. He gave you eternal life; you received it. He brought you from death into life; you were animated by an outside force. He did the work on the cross to pay the price for your sin; you received what He had given. He was resurrected from the grave on the third day; you have been spiritually resurrected like Him. Make sure He gets all the glory.

- Tip) **Don’t Use Churchy Language.** Pastor Tim Beougher has shared what he believes to be the churchiest testimony he’s ever heard. It was so bad that he wrote it down on his bulletin to use in helping others avoid the same problem. He recounts the man’s words:
“When the preacher gave the invitation, I was convicted. I stepped out into the aisle. I was immediately washed in the blood of the Lamb. I went forward and took the preacher’s hand, and I was seated with Christ in the heavenlies.”
If you’ve been in church your entire life, faithfully attending Sunday School and Worship every week, you might know exactly what the man was talking about when he discusses an invitation, being convicted, being washed in the blood of some Lamb, and being seated with Christ in the heavenlies. If you didn’t grow up in church or perhaps weren’t there “every time the doors were open,” you likely have no idea what he just said! Use language lost people can understand.
- Sum) Notice that this portion of Paul’s testimony is the longest part. People need to know how God intervened in your life. Give them details. Let them see His powerful hand in your life. Let them know what God has done, and let them know that He’ll do it for them, too. Stuart Hamblen sang, “It is no secret what God can do. What He’s done for others, He’ll do for you. With arms wide open, He’ll pardon you. It is no secret what God can do.”

3) Acts 22:14-16 – “Paul’s Life in Christ”

In these verses, the Apostle Paul talks about his life after receiving Christ. Notice, a third time, what he says and how he says it:

- 1) **What he says:** Having shared about who he was before coming to Christ and the miraculous way in which God saved him, Paul now discusses his life today. He talks about the mission God gave him and how he has been set on a new path—a path that is totally different from his former way of life. No longer is he God’s enemy. No longer is he persecuting the church. No longer is he living his life for himself, his purposes, and his own glory. All that has changed now, and it has changed for good.
 - 2) **How he says it:** You can almost hear Paul’s gratitude in his words. As he reflects on just how far God has brought him, he recognizes that he did not get there on his own. God intervened miraculously in his life, and God used other people to bless him in ways he could not have imagined beforehand. He wasn’t who he used to be anymore, and he was thankful for it.
- Illus.) **Count Your Blessings—Out Loud.** One of the most popular sayings in our country right now—both by Christians and non-Christians alike—is that they’re “blessed.” We use that term to recognize that some sort of outside force has been beneficial in our lives. For most Americans, that outside force is not Jesus. Maybe it’s karma, or maybe it’s their astrological sign. Maybe it’s fate, or maybe it’s good luck. You and I know that the only true blessings, the only eternally enduring blessings, are those given by our God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let them know how Jesus has blessed you!
- Tip) **You still mess up!** One of the most common objections lost people raise about Christians is that “there are too many hypocrites in the church.” What’s a hypocrite? Somebody who says one thing and does another. Do you know why the hypocrite accusation is so tough? Because it’s true. There *are* too many hypocrites in the church. And you’re one of them. And so am I. We all still mess up! As we walk with Jesus, we ought to be getting better, but we shouldn’t come across like we’ve got it all figured out and we’re somehow “holier than thou.” We’re not, and we still need Jesus to show us the right way—His way—every day.
- Sum) At this point in your testimony, talk about how God has blessed you—and not necessarily just in the material or physical sense. Talk about how God has blessed you “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3). Talk about the blessing of being “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Talk about how you used to be without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12), but now you have been brought near to God by the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:13). Count your eternal blessings—naming them one by one—so that the people around you might see just what God has done.

Conclusion:

In 1-2 minutes, recap your own testimony according to the pattern Paul gave in Acts 22.

My Life Before Christ:

How God Saved Me:

My Life in Christ:

Now, conclude by re-emphasizing the following three points to your congregation:

- 1) **Your story is powerful.** People may be able to argue with you about the tenets of the Christian faith, but they cannot argue with your personal experience. You lived your story. No one can tell you it didn't really happen.
- 2) **God will use your story to bring others to Christ.** When you tell your story to someone, you have no idea where they are in life. You have no idea what they're going through. You have no idea what God is already doing in their life. All you know is that God has led you to this place and to this person, and He's going to do something of eternal significance with your obedience in telling the story of what God has done in you.
- 3) **But for God to use it, you have to tell it!** You have been given a miraculous testimony by an Almighty God who loved you and sent His Son to save you. God reached down from heaven to get you, because you could not reach up to Him. In fact, you weren't even trying. That's a powerful story! Would you share it with someone who needs to hear it? Would you step out in faithful obedience to Christ and tell of what He's done for you? A lost and dying world is waiting... will you tell it?