

Paul's Testimony

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 0 0] Paul this evening in his testimony before King Agrippa and all those who were present and I had a preacher last Sabbath in the congregation at Everton Preachers saying that Paul made good use of every opportunity, any situation he found himself he made good use of it and to the extent of giving his own testimony. Now the giving of testimonies can be a delicate thing. We may perhaps tend to glory in our past which was everything but good or beautiful and so we have to be very careful.

But there are times as you know that we are put into that situation. Someone may ask us or did ask us, were you always interested in things spiritual? Did you always pray or did you always read the Bible? Did you always go to church? You have been asked these things that I think I have. People that are showing an interest and wondering if this was your sort of tendency down through the years or even maybe due to your background. So you have given the opportunity to tell them in some measure what you once were and how you believe the change came about. And so Paul is in that very situation this evening. And Paul of course is a very discreet man. His approach to people he does it in a very wise and

Christian way. And of course that is very important. How we approach men and women within the church and those who are without.

that we approach them in the spirit of Christ. That we would approach them with the love which Christ approached people. And with the same compassion. See how Jesus dealt with that woman that was taken in adultery. They brought her before him and they said she was caught in the very act. Now they said what do you say?

Moses said that she ought to be stoned to death. Well Jesus said any of you that has no sin you'll cast the first stone. But they couldn't do it. And in the final analysis she was found alone with Jesus.

[3 : 0 9] And Jesus turned to her and said where are those who have condemned you as it were to death. She said I don't know. Well he says neither do I condemn you.

I'm not condoning you. I'm not condoning you. Go and sin no more. And so it is to approach I feel our fellow man.

whether in the church or out with the church in the spirit of Christ. And with one of the brethren when I shall talk about this down in the session room.

Our approach to men and the men. Lest we turn them away from the gospel and from Christ himself.

And I also feel that when others come to our doors. These cults like Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons or such like.

[4 : 1 7] That we ought to deal with them in a Christian way. Not to drive them away. But to talk to them.

And try to show them. The error of their way. That they are zealous. That they have great zeal.

But that it is a zeal without knowledge. That there are people who have been and are being misled.

And that is how I feel. And that is how I feel. We ought to deal with them. To try and win them for Christ. I don't think we could win anyone for Christ by being rude and driving them away from our doors.

And so Paul I think is a shining example of a person who deals wisely and discreetly with people.

[5 : 25] And again Paul was not a lawbreaker. Paul would agree with the law. And even to the extent he said if I'm in the wrong and you think that I should be put to death.

I'm not willing, unwilling to die. I'm willing to do what the law has said or the judgment passed upon me.

If I am worthy of death. I'm not unwilling to die. He had nothing of this civil disobedience.

He would agree with the law as far as it was possible. As long as it didn't infringe on his spiritual, I feel, liberty.

So tonight we are here before King Agrippa. He is there, the Jews would say, as an evil doer.

[6 : 34] And he is brought to Festus. And Festus, thought by the eagerness of their prosecution.

And they are urging upon him to see to it that Paul, as it were, was severely dealt with.

And in the final analysis that he would be put to death. So Festus thought that something dangerous appeared to be in the character of the Apostle Paul.

That he was a breaker of the peace. Or trying to rebel against the Roman power. All these things, Festus thought might be against him.

But he is telling Agrippa why this man is here. The accusation in chapter 25 and at verse 19. But he said they had certain questions against him, against Paul, of their own superstition.

[7 : 46] That was the Jews. And of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

This is where the trouble has started. This is what they have against the Apostle Paul. That he is talking about one Jesus that they put to death.

And that he was resurrected. That he is alive forevermore. And Festus said to Agrippa, and because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters.

But when Paul had appealed to be reserved into the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. You see, he was left bound by Felix.

And now he is under Festus. And so he said, then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself.

[8 : 56] Agrippa showed some great interest in this man. Tomorrow, said Festus, thou shalt hear him. And on the morrow when Agrippa was come and Bernice was great pomp and was entered into the place of hearing with the chief priests and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth.

And Festus said, King Agrippa and all men which are here present with me, ye see this man, this small, almost insignificant man in chains.

You see, this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both of Jerusalem and also he has cried that he ought not to live any longer, that this man ought to be put to death.

But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death and that himself had appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him, of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my Lord.

Forfore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, O King Agrippa, that after examination I might have somewhat to write.

[10 : 21] For it seemeth to me unreasonable. Now this is something in Festus' favour to his credit. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not without to signify the crimes laid against him.

So Paul is privileged to appear before King Agrippa. And King Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.

And we read, Then Paul stretched forth a hand and answered for himself, and answered discreetly. He said, I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things for all.

I am accused of the Jews. I think it's a wonderful privilege that I'm allowed to speak to you and to tell you all that I would wish you and others to know and to understand.

Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews. He gave Agrippa's place as a learned man and a man that was well versed in the Jews' religion and in all their customs and beliefs.

[11 : 59] Forthorough said, I beseech thee to hear me patiently. Just don't become impatient if I speak too long.

And so Paul is saying, my manner of life. Now this is his testimony. And what his testimony led to and the impact his testimony, we believe, had on that assembled company.

My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among my known nation of Jerusalem, know all the Jews. These Jews have known me since I was a very young man.

Now that wasn't to his disadvantage. Sometimes maybe we feel that it is more difficult to speak in our own areas where people have known us since childhood.

But you remember what Jesus said to the converted demoniac, don't come with me, go back and tell them in your own home and all your acquaintances the great things that God has done for your soul.

[13 : 21] begin at home first and tell them there the great things that Jesus has done for your soul. So, in a sense, it could be an advantage to go back to our own areas where they have known us with all our faults and failings from our very birth.

And so, this is what Paul is saying that his manner of life from his youth which was at the first among his own nation of Jerusalem, know all the Jews which knew me from the beginning if they would testify that after the most strict effect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

You see, Paul was a very religious man. I believe Paul led quite a circumspect life but he was so engrossed in this religion of his the pharisaical spirit that he had that he was incensed against Christ and his church and in that sense Paul was an evil man although a very religious man.

And he said they knew me from the beginning and now I stand and I'm judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come.

Then he comes to the point why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead the raising of Christ why do you think it a thing incredible why should the Jews think it because as we said in the Galilee today Abraham believed in the power of the resurrection Abraham in whom they gloried he believed when he was asked to offer his only son he believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead he believed in the power of the resurrection and then he goes on further to give his own real testimony and his own former way of living I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth he couldn't himself understand

[16 : 06] Christ crucified Christ resurrected he could not just understand it and therefore he would have Christ and his chest wiped off the face of the earth and no one we feel ever worked so hard as Paul did to this end he was like Manasseh in the Old Testament Manasseh who shed innocent blood to the extent that it flowed through the streets of Jerusalem and this was as if another Manasseh in the New Testament that which thing I also did in Jerusalem and many of the saints did I shut up in prison having received authority from the chief priest and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them he put his Amen to the death of Stephen and we feel that that was a turning point in the life of Saul of

Tarshish at the stoning of Stephen when he held the clothes of those that stoned Stephen to death and when he heard Stephen saying I see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God and then saying Lord Jesus receive my spirit and he fell asleep in Christ but not before asking forgiveness for those who stoned him to death and Paul is telling us that he gave his voice he put his Amen to those who were stoning Stephen to death and I punished them off in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme and being exceedingly mad against them I persecuted them even unto strange cities if we saw Paul at that stage in his life we would almost say that he was beyond redemption he did everything in his power to persecute the church of Jesus

Christ and wipe it off as we said already wipe it off the face of the earth but then he tells Agrippa and the assembled company of the great change that came into his life he's telling us now his past as it were what he really was and what the people knew he was but now he's saying for upon as I went to Damascus you remember he was still breathing out threatening some slaughter against the church of Christ after the stoning of Stephen and there he's going to Damascus to bring men and women bound to Jerusalem there to persecute them again for upon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priest at midday all kings I saw in the way I light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining round about me and them which journeyed with me and when we were all fallen to the earth

I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in my own tongue the Hebrew tongue Saul Saul why persecutest thou me Saul what have you got against me can you give any reason why you are persecuting me you are persecuting me Saul when you are persecuting my people for they are the apple of my eye can you give any reason why you are persecuting me and I said who art thou lord I'm now confessing that I am a stranger to grace and to God I don't know you at all I don't know the one that

I was persecuting I confess that I am a stranger to grace and to God but Jesus said Saul it is hard for me to kick against the tricks my spirit has been striving with you yes Saul since that memorable scene when you stoned Stephen to death the arrow of conviction entered your heart the arrows that sharply pierce the heart of the enemies of the king and under his subjection the people down do bring it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks and Paul said who art thou lord I am a stranger to you and he said

[21 : 34] I am Jesus I am the very man whom thou hast over these years been persecuting that my church would be wiped off the face of the earth but although you have done all these things Saul of Tarshish there is still hope for you I have good news for you Saul of Tarshish all is not lost you are not condemned to an undone eternity but stand upon thy feet for I appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and those things in the which I will appear unto thee Saul of Tarshish I'm going to make of you a great man a great preacher of the gospel that your name will be mentioned as long as sun and moon and children what is impossible with man is possible with

God and so you are going to do great things for me delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee and this is going to be your life's work Saul of Tarsus to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sin and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in me that is to be your life's work to preach Christ and him crucified to warn men and women to flee from the wrath which is to come and to commend me to them knowing what I have done for you for that you can now say he loved me and he gave himself for me he saved me the chief of sinners so you can encourage other men and women who are still in sin that there is hope that

Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost to open their eyes and tell them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God and tell them that Christ alone is able to do this very thing that you are not able but you are preaching the Christ who is able whereupon he said oh king Agrippa I was not disobedient to the heavenly voice in another area said that he did all these evil things ignorantly and in unbelief the God of this world had blinded his eyes but now that his eyes are opened he is saying I was not disobedient to the heavenly voice and that is the great secret that when

God is speaking to us that we would readily respond son daughter give me thy heart as we said in the morning here am I send me I was not disobedient to the heavenly voice and therefore but showed first unto them of Damascus and of Jerusalem and throughout all the coast of Judea and then to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance it must have sounded strange to his former acquaintances knowing his life knowing how bitter he was against the church of Christ and that now he is preaching the faith which he once destroyed and

Manasseh did the same when Manasseh was converted he called upon the people that he caused to err to turn to the only living and true God and it's the same still it's the same still preachers of the gospel they were a wayward people they lived for this world and for the things of this world for the pleasures of sin which are but for a season and so that's how it goes from generation to generation men and women born again and going out preaching the gospel of redemption and for these causes the Jews called me in the temple and went about to kill me but then he goes on to say having therefore obtained half of God God has been good and gracious to me the

[27 : 25] God against whom I sinned so much grieved his spirit and yet he has been so good to me that I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great and so my friends God has brought you amen his mercy to this evening of having obtained health from God we continue unto this day for in God we all live we move and have our game if thou should mark iniquity O Lord who could stand we are here this evening as tokens of God's sparing motion of God's great love and concern for each one of us and so he's saying that he's witnessing to small and great saying and other things it's not a new thing that I'm preaching this has been preached and written about from as if the very beginning the things that the prophets and

Moses did say should come that Christ should suffer that he was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification this is what the prophets wrote about this is what David said this is what Moses said that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead the first to rise from the dead never to die again others rose from the dead to die again but Jesus rose to die no more I am he that was dead but is alive forever more and that this evening again we can say we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous thou hast your Lord most glorious ascended upon high and in triumph victorious less captive captivity thou hast received a gift for men for such as did be them yea even for them that

God the Lord in midst of them might dwell this was Paul's great testimony he was a rabbi but he is now in the midst of God's people and he has Christ in his own heart the things that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead and show light unto the people and to the Gentiles and then his speech is somewhat interrupted by Festus whether Festus was becoming too much for him we don't know but Festus said to Paul thou art beside thyself much learning does make thee mad this sort of religion and your education is driving you mad Paul you just don't know what you're saying or where you're standing but again we see how discreet

Paul was when he answered he said I am not mad most know Perseptus don't misunderstand me but speak for the words of truth and soberness I'm quite earnest in what I say I want to see people brought from darkness to light from the power of Satan unto God I want to tell them about Jesus telling the old story which is ever new for the king know as of these things before whom I speak freely for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him for this thing was not done in a corner all that he did himself in these unconverted days was well known I believe to King Agrippa and those present and what he did since his conversion was well known to them also and the crucifixion of

Christ was well known to them because Christ wasn't crucified in a corner he was crucified in open daylight before the whole world so none of these things were hidden from them because these things were not done in a corner and finally finally Paul is getting into a more personal way with Agrippa he's addressing himself now directly to Agrippa and saying King Agrippa believest thou the prophets I know that thou believest Agrippa wasn't a believer in Christ but he was a believer I feel in the Old Testament scriptures concerning the promised

[33 : 11] Messiah but like the other Jews one feels that Agrippa did not believe that Christ came and that the real Christ was crucified Agrippa may have still thought of Christ as Paul did once upon a time as Saul of Tarsus that he was an imposter and that he ought to be put out of the way and maybe that was Agrippa thought still but he still believed what the prophets had written and maybe like the other unconverted Jews was still looking for the promised Messiah although he had already come in the person of Jesus Christ then Agrippa said to Paul almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian and Paul said I would to

God as my greatest desire I would to God that not only thou but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am accept these bonds I don't want you to be persecuted I don't want you to be suffering as I have been but there is one thing I earnestly desire that you would know the Christ who made himself known to me on the Damascus road every one of you present here I would love to see you all one in Christ Jesus that you and I would be bound up with the Father Son and Holy Spirit in the precious bundle of life and not that not to be my desire and your desire as

Christians that all of us and if all here are not converted that it could be said of everyone here tonight that we are all one in Christ Jesus this was Paul's great desire I would to God it's my earnest desire that's what I'm laboring for that not only thou King Agrippa but also all that hear me this day were both almost and all together such as I am almost is not enough being on the threshold of the kingdom is not enough you can be on the threshold and be lost but that one step into the kingdom here below will assure you of a place in God's kingdom there above so we feel that

Paul's message was not all together in vain some say that Agrippa was just saying these things in a sort of light half dead way but I would like still to believe that Agrippa and maybe the rest of them were moved under Paul's wonderful testimony of his past and his present brought from darkness unto light from the power of Satan unto God we don't know if Agrippa ever entered the kingdom or those present they have gone the way of all the earth but we are here this sabbath evening and the question would arise do we believe have we accepted the

Jesus that Paul accepted and preached earnestly it's not almost but that we would be all together in the kingdom of God's dear son and as we said a few moments ago if we are in God's kingdom here we shall certainly be in God's kingdom there above you must be born again except you be born again you shall never enter into the kingdom of God Amen let's pray O Lord that thou wouldst prepare each one of us for our latter end we must all appear before the judgment fit of

[38 : 25] Christ there to give an account of the deed done in this body whether that be good or evil O Lord that thou wouldst prepare us for that great day around that great white throne and that judgment seat where our final decision is taken O God save any one of us from going down into the pit for thou hast found our access accept our thanks for thy goodness to us this day and for thy forbearance and long suffering that thou didst not mingle out blood without sacrifices and give us grace now to sing our closing song of praise and dismiss the thy blessing for

Jesus name Amen