



Gospel Encounters in Acts

Paul's Powerful Testimony

Acts 26:2-32

Context: Paul's Defenses and the Authorities' Rejections

- Paul was being followed by Jews who disliked his message; in Acts 21:27-36, Paul was arrested by Romans soldiers after a crowd of Jews from Asia accused him of defiling the temple.
- Paul makes a defense of his message, starting with a personal testimony of his conversion including how he himself used to be a persecutor of "the Way" (Acts 22:1-11).
- The Roman authorities intervene after Paul's audience again rejects him (Acts 22:22-29).
- Paul is brought before the Jewish Council where he brings up the issue of resurrection, dividing the Pharisees and the Sadducees. After yet another uproar, Paul is taken away by Roman soldiers who feared he would be killed (Acts 23:6-10).
- Jesus comes to Paul in a vision stating that Paul will testify about Him in Rome (Acts 23:11).
- Paul is taken to the Roman governor of Caesarea, Felix, who leaves Paul in prison for 2 years before Felix was succeeded by Festus (Acts 24:22-27).
- Paul appeals to Caesar, and Festus agrees to send him to Caesar. However, before appearing before Caesar, King Agrippa II expresses a desire to hear Paul's case himself, since by all accounts Paul was innocent of wrongdoing (Acts 25:13-27).
- Acts 26 records Paul's interactions with Agrippa wherein he outlines the narrative of not only his conversion, but how the cause for his situation at the hands of the Jews is because of the proclamation of the gospel.

The Concept of Testimony in Scripture

- To give a testimony means to bear witness regarding the facts about a subject in order to establish the truth of a matter.
 - Witness - To bear testimony to things seen, heard, transacted, or experienced (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary)
- **Old Testament:**¹
 - The created order *testifies* about the truth of the presence and power of God.
 - **Psalms 19:1–2** ¹*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ²Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.*
 - **Job 36:24–33** ²⁴*“Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. ²⁵All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. ²⁶Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. ²⁷For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, ²⁸which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. ²⁹Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? ³⁰Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. ³¹For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. ³²He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. ³³Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises.*
 - God’s special revelation to Israel through His covenants and laws is a self-witness of His character and salvific plan.
 - **Exodus 25:22** ²²*There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.*
 - **Exodus 38:21** ²¹*These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses, the responsibility of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.*
 - Justice in Old Testament Israel depended heavily on testimony, and was thus regulated.
 - **Deuteronomy 19:15** ¹⁵*“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.*

¹ Adapted from Douglas Buckwalter, [“Testimony.”](#) in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 766.

- **Leviticus 5:1** *"If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity;*
- God's Word is established as a witness against the sin of mankind. For example, God's Word was given as a witness against Israel, with God's predictions that His people would depart from Him ultimately coming true.
 - **Deuteronomy 31:26** ²⁶*"Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.*
 - **Joshua 24:26-27** ²⁶*And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. ²⁷And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."*
- **New Testament:**²
 - The New Testament expands the concept of testimony in view of the revelation in Jesus.
 - "Here again the content of the testimony is certifiable, objective evidence, and for this reason, it is considered true."³
 - **John 3:11** ¹¹*Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.*
 - **1 John 1:1-4** ¹*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*
 - **John 3:33** ³³*Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.*
 - Jesus' teachings and miracles testify that He is God. Jesus' death and resurrection testify that He is Lord over life and the promised Messiah. Jesus reveals the truth about, or testifies to, the very character and nature of God.

² Adapted from H. Douglas Buckwalter, "[Testimony](#)," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 767.

³ H. Douglas Buckwalter, "[Testimony](#)," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 767.

- **John 1:18** ¹⁸*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*
- **John 14:6** ⁶*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
- **John 10:38** ³⁸*"But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."*
- The gospel is solidly based on testimony of certifiable facts that happened in space and time, visible by many.
 - **Acts 1:21-22** ²¹*So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."*
 - **1 Corinthians 15:3-8** ³*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*
- The New Testament also speaks of Christian conduct as a "witness" of the truth of the gospel.
 - **John 13:34-35** ³⁴*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*
- The Spirit testifies about Christ, applying the gospel to the hearts of those who receive it by faith.
 - **John 15:26** ²⁶*"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."*
- To die for the faith is the ultimate form of testimony. The word for "martyr" means "to testify" or "bear witness" in Greek. Dying for Christ and the spread of the gospel is both a witness against persecutors and a positive witness for the truth.
 - 11 of the 12 apostles were executed for their faith
 - Stephen was the first martyr, and Paul saw it happen
 - Many saints died in the colosseum for their faith

- Some examples of testimony in the NT
 - **John 4:28-30,39-42** ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.
³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”
 - **Mark 5:18-20** ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

A Right Perspective on Our Testimonies

- We have established that Scripturally testimonies are bearing witness about the facts of a matter (in a legal sense), greatly expanded in the New Testament to refer to the final “set of facts” about the person and work of Christ as God’s revelation of salvation to His people.
- We are recounting God’s story, the facts about the nature of the universe and eternity as He has ordained and revealed.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ is the message we’ve been entrusted to share as a testimony about God (2 Corinthians 5).
- Our personal testimony is just one small part of God’s overall redemptive plan.
- As such, our personal testimony is our recounting of how God worked to reveal the truth of the gospel to us, how we were personally transformed by this message, and how we now live our lives for God’s glory.
- It is important to see that while our testimony may contain a presentation of the gospel, it is **not** the gospel. We must not confuse our own faith story with the gospel message itself.
- Apologetically, testimonies are excellent tools, for no one can make an argument against it. As I’ve heard somewhere, “the most powerful apologetic is a transformed life.”
- As we live our lives for Christ, Christ is revealed through us. This happens both in word and deed. (Romans 10:14; James 2:14-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20). **Both** are important aspects of our testimony.

A Case Study of Using Personal Testimony: Paul in Acts 26

- Consider the audience. (Acts 26:1-3).
 - Paul knew before whom he was standing; Agrippa was the last of the Herodian kings. He was a Roman-placed ruler, but was familiar with Jewish life and customs.
- Four elements to sharing your testimony: OMNI
 - **Old Life:** Who you were (Acts 26:4-11)
 - **Meet Christ:** How Jesus saved you (Acts 26:12-18)
 - **New Life:** Your new life in Jesus (Acts 26:19-23)
 - What trials has Christ brought you through?
 - What successes has Christ given you?
 - Where is your hope now placed?
 - **Invite:** Share how your hearer can experience the same (Acts 26:24-29)
 - Share the gospel
 - Call for a response
 - OMNIpotent – Believe God is able to save your hearer! (Acts 26:29)

Applications for Our Evangelism

- Know your testimony.
 - What was your life like before Christ?
 - How did you hear the gospel and meet Christ?
 - How has Jesus changed you?
- Remember that your testimony is not merely a past experience, it's your present reality!
 - How is Jesus working in you today? How has he been faithful?
 - How can you weave in "gospel threads" of God's grace *now* in your conversations?
 - How can you display and declare Christ in opportunities God has given you?
- Consider how your testimony may be a blessing to believers and non-believers alike.
 - Is there a particular trial or lesson you've learned that you could leverage to instruct others?
 - Are there non-believers who share your background with whom you could uniquely connect?
- Practice sharing your testimony.
 - Actively remind yourself of the grace you've been given!