



Sermon Series Notes

"Maintaining My Witness For God" (Acts 21:37-23:5)

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Intro: What the Holy Spirit has been warning Paul about, what other disciples have been warning Paul about (through the Holy Spirit), and what Agabus the prophet prophesied (Acts 21:10-11), is now happening. A mob drags Paul from the temple, shuts the gates, and are now proceeding to beat him to death. Someone reports what is happening to the commander of the Roman troops, he takes some officers with him, and when they arrive on the scene, the mob stops beating Paul. Paul is arrested, but the violence of the crowd is still so great that the Roman soldiers have to carry him into the barracks. Just before Paul enters the barracks, he asks the commander for permission to speak to the crowd. Read 21:40-23:5.

Paul is allowed to share his testimony, but after sharing his testimony, he loses his witness. ***My testimony tells people when and how I was saved, but my witness shows people how God has changed my life.***

Ananias ordering that Paul be struck on the mouth was a violation of the Law, so what Paul experienced was ***unjust suffering***. And what Paul said about Ananias was true. Jesus himself had accused the Pharisees of being like whitewashed tombs (Matt.23:27). Under the Law, a Jew would become unclean if they touched a dead body. There were rock sepulchers all over the place, and over the years some became half hidden or buried. So it was possible to inadvertently stumble across one and so become defiled. You would then have to go through purification rites before you could enter the temple again. So what they would do is paint these tombs with whitewash so they would stand out in order to avoid them. What Jesus was saying is that they were hypocrites, looking good on the outside but on the inside full of dead men's bones. And that's what Paul was saying about Ananias.

Even though Jesus spoke the truth about the Pharisees & Sadducees, he later submitted to the Father's will by enduring terrible unjust suffering at their hands (see I Peter 2:23). And that is the example he has left for us to follow. When Paul realizes he has failed to follow Jesus' example, he apologizes, immediately recalling Scripture that brought conviction as a result of his actions.

So here's my question. Do you have a testimony? When were you saved?

My second question is the one I want to spend the remainder of our time on. Do you have a witness?

There are four places that we need to maintain our witness for the Lord:

- The marketplace (in public)
 - 1 Peter 2:12 (NLT) Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.
 - 1 Tim.2:9-10
 - “How’s My Driving” (800 #); A couple weeks ago I cut someone off in order to get into the left lane to turn into the church parking lot, and I immediately thought, “I hope the person I just cut off isn’t going to Calvary Chapel.” But sure enough, they tailed me right to church! Good testimony pastor!

- The workplace
 - Daniel’s witness through his work ethic (Dan.6:4)
 - Titus 2:9-10 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, try to please them, not to talk back to them, but to show what they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.
 - Eph.6:5-8

- The home
 - 1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.
 - 1 Peter 3:1,7 addresses wives & husbands in the context of Christ’s example.
 - A husband said to his wife, “I don’t understand how God could make you so beautiful and so stupid at the same time?” She said, “Well, let me explain it to you. God made me so beautiful so you would be attracted to me. God made me so stupid so I would be attracted to you.”
 - A daughter said to her mother, “Mom, you told me that God created us, but dad says we evolved from monkeys over a long period of time. I’m confused.” Her mother then said, “Honey, when your dad says we evolved from monkeys, he’s referring to his side of the family.”

- The church
 - 1 Cor.14:23 So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?
 - 1 Cor.14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace...

Paul lost his witness here before the supreme court of his day. Can you think of anybody else in the Bible who had a testimony, yet lost their witness for the Lord?

- Abraham lying about his wife to Pharaoh while in Egypt (Gen.12)
- Abraham lying about his wife to Abimelech king of Gerar (Gen.20)
- King David after the way Nabal treated him (Summarize the story from 1 Sam.25, noting vv.21-22, 30-31). This happened right between 1 Sam.24 & 26. In both of these chapters David not only refused to harm king Saul, but sharply rebuked his men in not allowing them to lay a hand on Saul (1 Sam.24:1-7a; 26:1-11). Though David was an example to his men in regard to Saul, he failed when it came to Nabal, almost to the point of taking Nabal’s life, and the lives of all his servants.

- David really lost his witness later in life when he committed adultery with Bathsheeba, then had her husband murdered (II Sam.11). For who knows how long David lived as a hypocrite. This is the same man of whom God had said that he was “a man after God’s own heart.”
- Peter lost his witness in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:10-11).
 - I have done this on more occasions than I’d like to admit. For years I did it with my older brother. I was speaking truth, but all my words did was cut off ears. You can do this with your spouse, or in attempting to share truth with someone. God’s Word spoken in God’s time and in God’s character, cuts people to the heart ((Acts 2:36; Heb.4:12). But God’s Word spoken out of time and in the flesh only cuts off ears. See also James 1:19; II Tim.2:23-26.
 - Col.4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.
- Peter lost his witness when he three times denied knowing the Lord (Matt.26:69-75).

If you have lost your witness for Christ, what do you need to do in order to regain that witness?

Any action to regain a witness for Christ will require humility. See Phil.2:6-8.

- Humility involves self-denial
- Humility enables obedience

Apologize

Come clean (stop lying)

Repent of sin (See Psalm 51:1-12, noting v.12)

Put your sword away

Deny yourself, take up your cross

CONCLUSION

Rom.12:17-21 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil. But overcome evil with good.