

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/13/2022  
Acts 26 “My Story, His Story, Your Story”<sup>\*\*1</sup>  
Current Series: “*The Gospel on Trial*” Acts 21-28

Brad Brandt

Main Idea: When we share our personal testimony of salvation, we need to have three stories in mind, as Paul did in Acts 26. There is my story, His story, and your story.

- I. There is my story (1-8).
  - A. Share about your past (4-5).
  - B. Share about your present condition (6-8).
    1. I have hope.
    2. My hope is based on the promise of God.
- II. There is His story (9-23).
  - A. Share what the Lord did to convince you (9-18).
    1. Paul told what he used to think of Jesus (9-11).
    2. Paul told about the day of his conversion (12-18).
  - B. Share how the Lord changed you (19-23).
    1. I have a new Master (19).
    2. I have a new mission (20-21).
    3. I have a new message (22-23).
- III. There is your story (24-32).
  - A. Respond to objections (24-26).
  - B. Ask the question (27-28).
  - C. Call for a response (29-32).
    1. Some will change the subject.
    2. Some will focus on the messenger rather than the message.
    3. All will respond.

Take Inventory: To share a testimony you must *have* a testimony.

1. Do you have a story?
2. Can people see the story?
3. Are you sharing the story?

At the end of the service we will have the joy to come to the Lord’s Table. We will do as our Savior has taught us to do, as we love to do. We will stop and remember. Remember Him. Remember the sacrifice He made for us. Remember why He made it.

Whenever we do this, whenever we come to the Lord’s Table, we are commanded “to examine ourselves,” lest we “eat the bread and drink the cup in an unworthy manner (1 Cor 11:28).” There’s no better way to examine ourselves than to place ourselves under the ministry of God’s Word, for sitting under the ministry of the Word of God is a like sitting in front of a mirror that reveals the truth about ourselves.

The psalmist talked about the importance of asking the Lord to *search* us. So let’s read and pray Psalm 139, and then invite the Lord to search us through the sermon that follows. Then we’ll be ready to come to the table and remember, with thankful hearts.

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24*

I’d like to begin by asking you some personal questions. Are you a Christian? Are you glad you are a Christian? Would you say that becoming a Christian is the best thing that’s ever happened in your life? Do you think it would be good for other people to come to know Christ as you do?

I’m confident that most of us would answer these questions *yes!* It’s the best thing that’s ever happened to us! God, who is reconciling sinners to Himself and offering them the gift of eternal life if they will but repent and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, has

---

<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Acts series preached at WBC in 2003.

done that *for us*! We believe in Christ. We cherish this good news. We stake our eternal destiny upon it.

But can we share it? Can we share what we believe with others?

This morning, we're going to learn from God's Word that if we're in Christ, we have a tool in our ministry tool box. The Lord Himself put it there. And He wants us to use it to make His glorious gospel known to lost people He brings into our lives.

This tool is a story. It's your own personal story.

Most people know how to tell a story. Kids tell stories. Guys get together and tell stories. I would assume ladies do the same.

If we were having lunch together and I said, "Tell me a story about something significant that happened to you when you were in school," you probably could do that. Or if I said, "Tell me the story of how you got your job," or "became interested in the hobby you love," you could do that. If I asked you to tell me the story of "the happiest day of your life," or "tell me about one of the hardest days," you likely would think for a moment, and then start talking.

We know how to tell stories. We enjoy telling them, and most of the time, listening to them too.

So here's the tool. If you're in Christ, you have a story to tell, the story of what God graciously did in your life to bring you to Himself, from death to life, from bondage to sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of being a child in His forever family.

I know you know how to tell stories, about your kids, and your team's big win last week, and the deal you closed at work. But can you tell this story, and are you telling it? The amazing story of how God saved you.

There's incredible power in that simple story. That story can literally revive a discouraged soul, which is why we need to tell it to ourselves regularly. And of course, tell it to others too, for it can affect lost souls too, as we'll see today in Acts 26.

Several weeks ago, in our study of Acts 22, we watched Paul share his story with a crowd while standing on the steps of the Jewish temple. Today it's a different audience, but the same approach. In Acts 26, Paul leaves his prison cell and appears before Governor Festus and King Agrippa, with a host of other Roman dignitaries present. And he makes the most of the occasion. How? He shares his story.

The great thing about your story (or 'testimony') is that it's irrefutable. Your hearers can't deny it. You're sharing what happened, what happened *to you*. And by sharing what happened to you, you are helping them see what can and needs to happen to them.

As we discussed when we examined Paul's testimony in Acts 22, a good testimony is conversational, not preachy. It establishes common ground. It points people to Christ and leaves the door open for more.

Plus, it's brief. It takes 2 minutes and 25 seconds to read aloud Paul's testimony in Acts 22. It takes just over 3 minutes to read the testimony he shared with Agrippa in Acts 26. We should be able to share our story in 2 to 3 minutes as well.

We'll learn how today. Obviously, every person's testimony will be different, for every person is different. But there are some basic, common elements. When we share our personal testimony of salvation, we actually need to have *three stories in mind*, as Paul did in Acts 26. There is **my** story, **His** story, and **your** story.

### I. There is my story (1-8).

When I say, *my story*, I certainly don't mean that I tell the story in a way that glorifies *me*. That would be plagiarism, for I didn't write the story. It's *His* story, as we'll see.

But it actually begins at a time when He wasn't in my life, when I wasn't living for His glory, when I didn't even know Him.

So I begin my story by telling the painful reality of what my life was like before the Lord saved me. Let's watch how Paul did just that.

Luke gives the setting for Paul's testimony in verse 1a, "So Agrippa said to Paul, 'You have permission to speak for yourself.'"

This is actually the fourth time Paul *spoke for himself*. Two years prior he was arrested and falsely accused in the temple, following which he gave a defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Then he was transported to Caesarea where he appeared before the Roman governor, Felix. Felix played political games with Paul and kept him in prison without grounds for two years. When Rome replaced Felix, Paul then stood before Governor Festus. Festus, too, chose the road of expedience rather than justice with Paul, so that Paul appealed to Caesar. Since Festus didn't know what to write in the report he would send along with Paul to Caesar, he asked Agrippa to interview Paul. That interview became the occasion for the testimony we're about to consider.

Verse 1 concludes, "Then Paul stretched out his hand [which was in chains; verse 29] and made his defense." Paul may be a prisoner, but he sees himself as an ambassador. And he has a message to share with this royal crowd.

Verses 2-3 "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, <sup>3</sup> especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently."

Notice Paul's courtesy and respect. Granted, he was a man of great courage and boldness, afraid of no man. But he was also gracious, warm, and personal. The reason he was glad to appear before Agrippa wasn't because the king was a good guy, for he certainly wasn't. Indeed, he was morally corrupt, as we discussed last time.

But he had this in his favor. In contrast with Festus, who was a Roman, Agrippa was a Jew and knowledgeable of Jewish customs. Those customs were the reason essentially that Paul was on trial.

When we share our story, it's important to know our audience. Use terms they'll understand. Use features from your life that will connect with them. Make the connection, and then simply tell them about yourself, starting with your past.

**A. Share about your past (4-5).** "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. <sup>5</sup> They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee."

Obviously, we can't share everything about our past in a three minute testimony. We must be selective. So pick an aspect from your past that will both create interest and provide a launching pad.

Paul shared about his upbringing. That was important for this audience. He was accused by the Jews of being an anti-Jewish, Gentile-loving menace to society. Paul simply pointed out the facts...

I was born into a Jewish home in Tarsus, but later moved to Jerusalem for rabbinic training. After that, I lived a zealous life as a *Pharisee*.

Using that word said tons to Agrippa. A Pharisee was a separatist. He didn't play religion. He took his devotion to Yahweh very seriously. He wasn't just a Jew. He was a fundamentalist Jew.

By now Agrippa was hooked. He must have wondered, "If that's true, Paul, if you were raised a Pharisee, then why do the Jews hate you?"

Anticipating that question, Paul proceeded to share the following in verses 6-8, “And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,<sup>7</sup> to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!<sup>8</sup> Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?”

Notice how Paul moved from the past to the present. I *lived* as a Pharisee, but now I am on trial because of *my hope*. So do the same. First share about your past, but don’t stay in the past.

**B. Share about your present condition (6-8).** We are no longer what we once were. What’s different now? According to Paul, the difference involves two divine gifts.

1. *I have hope.* Paul uses a variant of the term “hope” three times with Agrippa. In the NIV, “It is because of my *hope* in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are *hoping* to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this *hope* that the Jews are accusing me.”

Paul’s critics presented him as a radical, negative man, as being *against* them. Paul turns it around. He shows that he isn’t anti-Jewish. He *has* something and is *for* something. What’s that? *Hope*. He is *for* what the twelve tribes have been waiting for throughout the centuries. So, rather than being a renegade, he is a complete Jew. He has hope, the hope of the Jews.

Where did Paul get his hope? Here’s where. He tells Agrippa...

2. *My hope is based on the promise of God.* “It is because of my hope in what *God has promised our fathers* that I am on trial today (NIV).” Hope, if it’s real, must have a firm foundation. We don’t manufacture hope. We must *receive* it. “My hope is based on the promise God made to our fathers,” Paul emphasized. “What God promised the Jews He has now fulfilled.”

Now, just what is that hope? Paul hints at it at the end of verse 8 and will develop it more fully in another minute. “Why should any of you consider it incredible that *God raises the dead*?” There’s my hope. It’s been the hope of the Jews since Abraham. It’s the fact of the resurrection.

Brothers and sisters, take careful note. Too often we’re known for what we’re *against*, rather than what we’re *for* and *have*. And for good reason. Too often we *talk about* what we’re against rather than what we’re for and have. What is it that we are *for* and *have*? It’s the *hope* that God promised! We have what the world lacks and desperately needs. We have hope! That’s what we need to share with people.

So this is where we begin. It’s where Paul began. With *my* story. We tell something about ourselves so that our listener will identify with us and begin to wonder what we have that they lack. Then tell them how we got it. How?

We move from *my* story to *His* story.

## II. There is His story (9-23).

This is the beauty of a testimony. It’s not preachy. In fact, a good testimony doesn’t use the second-person pronoun, not at this point (that will come), but uses the first-person pronoun. I’m sharing what the Lord did in my life, how my story became His story.

Here’s what it sounds like. When you share His story, focus on two things.

**A. Share what the Lord did to convince you (9-18).** Don’t give the impression that *you* changed your life, for the Lord is the One who did it. Tell how He did it, how He convinced you of your need to change. In Paul’s case, he talked about two subjects.

1. *Paul told what he used to think of Jesus (9-11).* “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

Paul looks back 25 years into his past. There were certainly people living in Caesarea, perhaps some right in this room, who could substantiate what he is saying. I used to despise the name of Jesus—yes, they’d heard him. I used to do all I could to eliminate that name from society—yes, they’d seen him in action. I used to hunt down Christians as if they were dangerous, wild animals and dispose of them—once again, yes, these were the undeniable facts of the past.

My friend, I don’t know what your pre-Christian memories are like. I do know that a lot of people struggle with the past. Let this sink in. Paul had to live with the memory that he had once persecuted and killed Christians. Yet as bad as that was, something worse haunted him.

You say, “What could be worse for a Christian than to have the memory that you once murdered Christians?”

It’s this, as LaSor puts it, “To remember that there were some whom you caused to curse the name of Jesus—those whose faith was not strong enough and you made them deny their Savior!”<sup>2</sup>

“I did that,” Paul confessed. “I compelled the saints to blaspheme (KJV).”

Some people try to deal with the pain of past sin by ignoring it. They refuse to acknowledge what they did, and certainly avoid talking about it. Perhaps that’s what you’ve done. I encourage you to do what Paul did. Paul didn’t sugar-coat his past. Nor did he glamorize it. Instead, he chose to allow the Lord to use it.

This is so helpful. If we deal with our past sin God’s way, we can then use the story as a spotlight that will help others see Jesus.

“How do we deal with sin God’s way?” you ask. That’s the subject Paul addresses next in his testimony.

2. *Paul told about the day of his conversion (12-18).* Listen to verses 12-14, “In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup> At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. <sup>14</sup> And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’”

Do you remember what happened when God saved you? I do. What a glorious day in my life! I’d been struggling with the fear of dying. But the Lord took away that fear, and replaced it with the marvelous assurance that I would be with Him forever!

Paul gives some important details about his conversion. He answers the question *where*—I was on a road outside of Damascus. And the question *when*—It was noon. And *how*—the Lord broke into my life; I wasn’t even looking for Him, but He sought me, dropped me to my knees, called me by name (“Saul”), repeated my name (“Saul, Saul”), confronted my sin with a question (“Why do you persecute me?”), and then gave me a word picture that summed up the futility of my life (“It is hard for you to kick against the goads”).

---

<sup>2</sup> LaSor, p. 358.

Barclay explains the significance, “When a young ox was first yoked it tried to kick its way out. If it was yoked to a one-handed plough, the ploughman held in his hand a long staff with a sharpened end which he held close to the ox’s heels so that every time it kicked it was jagged with the spike. If it was yoked to a wagon, the front of the wagon had a bar studded with wooden spikes which jagged the ox if it kicked. The young ox had to learn submission the hard way and so had Paul.”<sup>3</sup>

Verse 15, “And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’”

I don’t know what went through Paul’s mind at that point. He doesn’t say. But I can just imagine it sounded like this. “Uh, oh. I’m in trouble. If the voice I’m hearing is the voice of Jesus, then Jesus isn’t dead but alive. And if Jesus is alive, then I’ve been all wrong about Him. And after what I’ve been doing to His people, I’m in big trouble. He’s going to kill me. It’s all over.”

At which point Paul received the second shock of his life. Verse 16, “But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you.”

In other words, I’m not going to kill you, Saul, far from it. I’m giving you a new purpose from now on. You’re going to work for Me!

You say, “How could the Lord use Paul, after what he had done?”

For the same reason He can use you and me. It’s called *grace*. About five years after his conversion (AD 64) Paul wrote a letter to a close friend and reflected on the difference grace made in his life (1 Timothy 1:12-14): “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

Yes, God can save anyone, no matter what they’ve done in life. And when He saves that person, He takes over the controls of his or her life.

Here’s what He told Paul in verses 17-18 (NIV), “I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

That last statement teaches us some vital realities regarding God’s forgiveness. We learn that forgiveness is *necessary* because of sin, *available* because of Jesus, and *experienced* simply and only through faith in Him.

So, in giving your testimony, simply do as Paul did. Share the story of what the Lord did to convince you. Then take it a step further.

**B. Share how the Lord changed you (19-23).** Paul made it clear that when the Lord entered his life, three practical changes took place. Since the same goes for us, I’ll use the first-person pronoun.

1. *Change #1: I have a new Master (19).* “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” When the Lord comes into our lives, He doesn’t intend to be a silent spectator. He enters and starts giving directions. And Paul says, what he told me to do, I did. I knew I had a new Master.

2. *Change #2: I have a new mission (20-21).* “...but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the

---

<sup>3</sup> Barclay, p. 178.

Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.<sup>21</sup> For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.”

Paul makes it clear that he didn't waste any time in obeying the Lord's command. He started where? Right where he was saved, in Damascus. And from that point on, he lived to fulfill this new, God-given mission. He would take the message of Jesus to the world and call people far and wide to respond in three ways.

Repent, turn to God, and prove your repentance by your deeds. Paul preached that a person is saved by faith in Christ alone. But he also made it clear that faith in Christ Jesus is never alone.

G. H. Lang is right when he observes, “None more firmly than Paul rejected works, before or after conversion, as a ground of salvation; none more firmly demanded good works as a consequence of salvation.”<sup>4</sup>

This brings us to a third change. I have a new Master, and a new mission.

3. *Change #3: I have a new message (22-23).* “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:<sup>23</sup> that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

As a Pharisee Paul had believed a very different message. It wasn't salvation by grace, but salvation by human effort. He clung to a version of the message that most people in the world believe today.

*If I do the right things, I'll make it to heaven, for heaven is where good people go.*

Sounds nice, but that's not true. And it's not true because the Creator and host of heaven says it's not true. No one comes to the Father, except by Me, said Jesus.

Friends, the message matters, and when we share His story, we need to make sure we say this part very clearly. What is the message we believe? Listen again to Paul.

*The Christ must suffer.* Not a Christ, but THE Christ. He is the only way.

*Must suffer.* The suffering of Christ is not optional to the gospel message. If you preach only the *life* of Christ, how He cared for hurting people, how He addressed matters of injustice, and so forth, what you have said is true, and insufficient. Of course, the Christ cared for hurting people, and the greatest display of His care was His suffering.

The Christ must suffer. And why? Why did He suffer? To inspire us? To show us how we too should suffer? Indeed, His suffering should inspire and instruct us, but those aren't the primary purposes for His suffering. What is?

The answer goes back to that word Paul used in verse 20. *Repent.* Paul said that he preached to Jews and Gentiles alike that they should *repent*. And why is repentance necessary? Because of *sin*. Adam's sin. And ours.

This is why the Christ must suffer. *Sin*. Not His sin, for He is perfect. He suffered for our sin. He came to die in the place of those who had transgressed the law of God, to make an atoning sacrifice for them, to remove the sin barrier that cut them off from God. He suffered so that sinners, like us, could be forgiven and reconciled back to God.

This is our message, and yet there's more. The Christ must suffer, and die, and then what?

*Become the first to rise from the dead.* Don't miss that. If Christ died and remained dead, then we sinners are still on our own, still cut off from God. But He's not dead. He has risen from the dead. Indeed, He is the *first to rise from the dead*.

Yes, *first*. First means others will join Him. How will that happen? Here's how.

---

<sup>4</sup> In F. F. Bruce, p. 493.

*He would proclaim light*, says Paul. Who is He? He refers to Christ, the One who suffered and is the first to rise from the dead. Now that He has risen, He is proclaiming light. How? Through His people, like Paul, and you and me. To whom?

*Both to our people and to the Gentiles*, says Paul. Our people, that's the Jews. And Gentiles too. In other words, this *light* is for all people, for everyone who is living in darkness.

And this brings us to the third story we must have in mind when we share our testimony. My story. His story. *Your* story.

### III. There is your story (24-32).

As a born again Christian, I long to see my story, which is His story, become your story! That's why we share our testimony with people, as Paul did with King Agrippa and the others.

So how do we make that transition? What's involved in turning the conversation from my story, to His story, to *your* story? Paul shows us. We must prayerfully engage our listener in these three ways. Respond. Ask. Call.

**A. Respond to objections (24-26).** If we share God's Word effectively, there will probably be objections, especially if it's new to the hearer.

Verse 24, "And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, 'Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.'"

It's ironic that Festus didn't think Paul was insane when he shared about persecuting the church, but this talk about someone rising from the dead was too much to bear. It just didn't fit into his Roman, polytheistic world-view. "You're crazy, Paul!"

Wiersbe remarks, "Nobody called D. L. Moody crazy when he was energetically selling shoes and making money, but when he started winning souls, people gave him the nickname, 'Crazy Moody.'"<sup>5</sup>

It's interesting to note what lost people consider crazy. Sexually transmitted diseases are killing this country, but talk about abstinence and people will say, "You're crazy!" Alcohol is a primary contributor to traffic fatalities, domestic violence, and family breakup, yet if you suggest, "Why not get rid of alcohol?" you're considered a fanatic.

Notice Paul's response in verses 25-26, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner."

I'm challenged by Paul. He's not intimidated by some pushback. He knows that Christianity is historical, factual, and reasonable. His goal isn't to impress his hearers. It isn't even to gain his freedom. It is to be a faithful witness.

Now we've come to what is perhaps the hardest thing to do when sharing our testimony. So often we tell the truth about Christ and what he's done for us, but then we freeze up. We hem-haw and stutter. We break eye contact and feel self-conscious.

What should we do? This...

**B. Ask the question (27-28).** Verse 27, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

Those are hard words to say but they must be said. We must turn the spotlight on the other person and ask, "Do you believe? Do you believe what I've just shared with you?"

---

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, p. 506.



This is what a person must do to be saved. Knowing some facts isn't enough. Agreeing that it makes sense isn't enough. A person must *believe*.

On another occasion, Paul was asked by a jailor in Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" And Paul told him, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31)."

In Acts 26 Paul asks Agrippa the question behind the question. The question, of course, is, do you believe Jesus? But Agrippa's not ready for that question, not yet. So Paul tills the soil so to speak with a preliminary question.

*Do you believe the prophets?* Paul knows that if Agrippa answers that question 'yes,' if he says he does believe the prophets, then he must face the follow-up question, "Is Jesus the one the prophets predicted?"

And apparently, Agrippa knows what Paul knows. And he's starting to feel a little uncomfortable about the direction this conversation is heading.

Notice his reply in verse 28, "And Agrippa said to Paul, 'In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?'" In the NIV, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" The KJV says, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Some think Agrippa was mocking. Others believe he was raising an honest objection, that he needed more time to process what he was hearing. Regardless, of this we can be sure. Agrippa knows that Paul cares for his soul, so much so that he just shifted the conversation from my story, to His story, to *your* story.

And this brings us to the third and final way Paul engaged Agrippa (and the others). Respond to objections. Ask the question. Then...

**C. Call for a response (29-32).** Verse 29, "And Paul said, 'Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.'"

Paul leaves no doubt. Yes, that's what he wants, for Agrippa to become a believer in Christ. Indeed, he wants more than that. Notice how Paul broadens the invitation.

"It's not only *you*, Agrippa, but *all who are listening to me today* that need to be saved. And I'm praying to God you will be!"

Oh, brothers and sisters, do the people in our lives know that we care about their souls, that we want them to be become as we are, a born-again Christian? Have they heard it from our lips?

What kind of response did Paul receive from his invitation? Notice verse 30, "Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them."

This is so real to life, isn't it? What happens when we present Christ to people and invite them to respond? Here's what happens. First of all...

1. *Some will change the subject.* Luke says the king and his mistress-sister and the governor got up and left the room. End of conversation.

But it didn't end the *effect* of the conversation. Notice verses 31, "And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, 'This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.'"

Yes, some will change the subject, but they can't *escape* the subject. The story we've just shared is too powerful, too compelling.

Here's something else that may happen.

2. *Some will focus on the messenger rather than the message.* Like Agrippa did in verse 32, "And Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'"

Did you catch that? Agrippa talks about the messenger instead of the message. I've had that happen. "Oh, you're such a nice man. Thanks for sharing that with me, Pastor. The world needs more people like you."

But what about the message? What about *you*? What are you going to do with Christ? Will my story, which is His story, become your story?

Friends, know this. When we present the gospel to people...

3. *All will respond.* When a person says, "I'm not ready. I need more time," he's responding. He's saying to Christ, no, I don't need you. Likewise, when a person says, "I need to clean up my life first," he too is responding. He's saying to Christ, no, what You've done isn't enough for me. And when a person says, "I just don't feel it. I'd become a Christian if I just felt something," he too is responding, and saying, "God's Word isn't enough for me. I refuse to trust Him. I need more."

Everybody responds, including *you* right now, my friend.

Think about this. When Paul went back to his cell that day in chains, he was the only person to leave the room *free*. Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, and all the rest of the powerful, finely dressed dignitaries left the room that day still enslaved to their sins. The truth is, Paul wasn't on trial that day, not in the eternal scheme of things. They were. And they were offered a free pardon from the Judge Himself. They heard, my story, His story, your story, and they said, no.

Take Inventory: To share a testimony you must *have* a testimony.

1. *Do you have a story?* Has God given you a redemption story?

2. *Can people see the story?* Some people have a wonderful conversion story, but if they shared it few would believe them. Why not? Because, simply put, they don't look very converted. Can people *see* the story in you?

3. *Are you sharing the story?* Let's share it this week!

**Closing Song:** #185 "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (all four verses)

### **Communion**

When we come to the Lord's table, we come to remember. We remember our story, and it's not pretty. But then we remember His story, which is why we have hope today.

Let's listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 26:26–29: "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,<sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Why do we take the bread and eat it? And why do we take the cup and drink it? Jesus tells us why in verse 28. "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many *for the forgiveness of sins.*"

We have sins. He shed His blood to cover our sins. If you believe that, this table is for you. To remember what He did for you. And to thank Him yet again. And to worship Him, not by yourself, but along with others who have had their sins forgiven just like you have.