

If Only You Knew

Testifying with Confidence in the Face of Power

Acts 26:1–32

Focus: Paul stands before Agrippa and Festus not merely to defend himself, but to declare what Christ has done in his life. This session helps believers embrace the power of their personal story and share it with confidence, especially when the audience is skeptical or influential. Your testimony might be the very thing that makes someone say, “Almost persuaded.”

I. Why This Study?

A. Objective:

1. To examine how Paul testifies boldly and faithfully before those in authority
2. To encourage believers to see their life story as a sacred tool of witness
3. To explore how personal transformation can disarm hostility and open hearts to the gospel

B. Relevance:

1. Many Christians underestimate the spiritual power of their own journey
2. In a world where platforms are elevated and vulnerability is often avoided, Paul’s raw honesty before power is both rare and relevant
3. This passage equips believers to speak truth about their past, hope in their present, and clarity about their calling, even when their audience is skeptical or influential

II. Context of Acts 26:1–32

A. Key Takeaway:

1. Paul has appealed to Caesar, but before he is sent to Rome, Festus invites King Agrippa to hear Paul’s case.
2. This is no ordinary hearing. It is a carefully staged display of _____, _____, and imperial _____.
3. Agrippa and Bernice enter with great fanfare, surrounded by _____ officials and _____ elites.
4. Yet amid all this grandeur, Paul stands calmly and delivers one of the most profound personal testimonies in all of Scripture.

5. He recounts his early life as a strict Pharisee, his persecution of Christians, and his dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.
6. Paul does not focus on _____ arguments or character _____. Instead, he centers his story on what Christ has done in him and through him.
7. His purpose is not merely _____ but proclamation.

B. Key Takeaway:

When you stand before power, prestige, or pressure, your greatest weapon is not argument or applause. It is a life transformed by grace and a voice willing to speak of that grace with _____ and _____.

III. What Can We Learn from Paul's Confident Testimony Before Power?

A. Your Story Is Worth Telling, Even to Those in High Places (vv. 1–3)

1. Paul opens his speech with _____, not flattery. He acknowledges Agrippa's familiarity with Jewish customs and controversies, which establishes credibility _____ surrendering truth.
2. The word *apologeisthai*, meaning to make a defense or give an account, appears in Paul's opening. But what follows is not a legal defense in the usual sense. It is a testimony of _____.
3. Often we believe our story is only valuable among those who share our background.
4. But Paul teaches that testimony is never wasted, even among the _____ or the _____.
5. Whether you are in a courtroom or a boardroom, before family or authority, your witness matters.

B. God Can Use Every Part of Your Past (vv. 4–11)

1. Paul reviews his background as a Pharisee, highlighting his deep religious training and former zeal in persecuting Christians.
2. He uses the word *ekballo*, to cast out or drive out, describing his violent acts against the early church.
3. He does not _____ his past. Instead, he lets the _____ frame the light of his transformation.
4. St. John Chrysostom once preached, "The greater the sinner, the more resplendent the grace." Paul's past is not a liability but a platform.

5. Your own broken places, your mistakes, your misjudgments, your former ignorance become _____ ground when offered to God.
6. Mental health therapist Dr. Thema Bryant reminds us, “Healing isn’t denial of your history. It’s integration of your past into your purpose.”

C. A Divine Encounter Can Shift Everything (vv. 12–18)

1. Paul recounts his Damascus Road moment with vivid language. The phrase “a light from heaven, brighter than the sun” (phos ek tou ouranou) conveys both _____ and _____.
2. Jesus speaks directly to Paul, asking, “Why are you persecuting me?” and commissions him to open eyes, turn people from darkness to light, and from Satan to God.
3. Mystic and theologian Julian of Norwich once wrote, “God showed me a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, and it was all that is made. It lasted and lasted because God loves it.”
4. Paul’s encounter with Jesus shows that a moment of divine _____ can reframe an entire life.
5. We may not all see visions, but every believer carries a moment where grace became _____. That moment is worth remembering and repeating.

D. The Gospel Offends Some and Awakens Others (vv. 19–23)

1. Paul testifies that he was not _____ to the heavenly vision.
2. The word apeithes, meaning unpersuaded or unwilling, contrasts sharply with Paul’s immediate submission. He begins preaching repentance and new life through Christ, not only to Jews but also to Gentiles.
3. This gospel _____ some and _____ others.
4. Festus interrupts, accusing Paul of madness.
5. Paul responds not with defensiveness but with calm clarity. “I am not out of my mind... I speak true and _____ words.” Here, Paul uses alētheias kai sōphrosynēs, truth and sound-mindedness.
6. In today’s polarized world, believers must learn to speak gospel truth with both _____ and emotional _____.
7. Psychiatrist Dr. Curt Thompson observes, “Confession and testimony integrate the brain and open space for healing, both in the speaker and the hearer.”

E. “Almost Persuaded” Still Matters (vv. 24–32)

1. Agrippa famously replies, “Do you think in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”
2. The phrase *en oligo*, meaning in a little time, suggests Agrippa is moved but resistant.
3. Paul’s answer is both bold and pastoral: “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but all who hear me might become as I am, except for these chains.”
4. Even when people do not convert, your testimony has _____.
5. Paul was planting seeds. His job was not to _____ results but to _____ witness.
6. St. Teresa of Avila once prayed, “Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. God alone is enough.”
7. When we testify with _____, _____, and _____, the Holy Spirit does the rest.

IV. Scholars’ and Theological Insights on Testifying with Courage

- A. St. John Chrysostom: “No flame can destroy a soul that is set on fire by grace.”
- B. Julian of Norwich: “He said not, ‘You shall not be troubled,’ but ‘You shall not be overcome.’”
- C. Dr. Thema Bryant: “Telling your story is not reliving trauma. It is reclaiming power.”
- D. Dr. Curt Thompson: “When we tell our story truthfully in the presence of another, we rewire shame into freedom.”
- E. St. Ignatius of Loyola: “Give me only your love and your grace, and I am rich enough.”
- F. Dr. Christina Cleveland: “Your body carries your testimony. Even when your words falter, your presence preaches.”

V. Prayer Focus

1. Pray for courage to share your story, especially in intimidating or skeptical spaces

2. Ask God to remind you of how far you have come and how deeply grace has shaped you
3. Intercede for those who are almost persuaded, that their hearts may open fully
4. Pray for wisdom to know when to speak and peace when your story is met with resistance

VI. Key Takeaway

Your testimony is more than memory. It is ministry. Told with clarity and rooted in Christ, your story can challenge the proud, comfort the broken, and open hearts that logic never could.

VII. Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. When has sharing your testimony felt intimidating? What helped you move forward with it anyway?
2. How can you better integrate your past, both good and bad, into your spiritual witness?
3. Who are the Agrippas in your life, those who are almost persuaded but not quite committed?
4. How can telling your story be an act of healing, not just evangelism?
5. What steps can you take to become more confident in declaring what Christ has done for you?