

What's Your Story?

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I believe this morning that it is our desire, each one of us sitting here to become and be a contagious, effective Christian who is not ashamed of the Gospel and is willing to share that Good News with those around us. As some of you may know, I am a big fan of cakes and to bake a cake you need a good mix of ingredients and in a way, the same applies for us if we are to become effective Christians on fire for the LORD. Last week our brother Ife told us that we need to be authentic, be yourself and not an imitator of what you are not. We can obviously be imitators of God as Paul reminds the Ephesians by having a forgiving spirit and by acting justly as our Lord did but that's where the imitation should stop. When I look at **1 Peter 3:15**, I am challenged by the fact that I should "in my heart set apart Christ as Lord" first of all. But I should also "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks me to give the reason for the hope that I have. But do it with gentleness and respect".

This morning, I would like to give you another ingredient and it has to do with Your Story, What is Your Story? How has Christ made a difference in your life? Your reaction may be that 'he has indeed made a difference, but don't expect me to go round telling everyone and making a fool of myself'. The thing is, the world is waiting for good news and the most important message mankind can be given today is that 'Christ came at just the right time and died for sinners who had no use for him'. The Bible tells me in **1 John 5:10** that "anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony (or witness) in his heart" and so we should offer this message to a confused generation as Christ when he was about to return to glory commanded us.

Would you please turn your Bible to Acts 26 where the apostle Paul gives us an idea of how our story should be told with effectiveness. The Jewish leaders wanted to kill Paul but he appealed to Caesar the emperor and managed to get to defend himself before King Agrippa and some other officials.

Illustration: ABC with Postman Pat / BCA with Preacher Paul

Before looking at Paul's story in more details, I would like to encourage you because we can easily be taken aback by Paul's testimony and think that ours is useless so we shouldn't even bother. I believe this is a lie from the enemy who obviously does not want you to share the Good News with those who are perishing. Your story is important because it is unique and many people can relate to it more than they will to biblical principles. Your story can serve as a relational bridge on which Jesus can walk from your heart to that of the people you are talking to.

We are going to look at three sections in this passage to help us organise and clarify things in our minds.

Let's focus first of all on [verses 4-11](#) which describe **Paul Before Christ**. Here, Paul tells about his life growing up. He was a Pharisee and he was convinced that he should do everything possible to oppose the teachings of Jesus, including putting Christians in prison and even condemning them to death.

Paul BC is a good example of zeal and enthusiasm used in the wrong way. Paul was so obsessed with persecuting the early Christians that he would go the extra mile to find them out. Spiritually speaking, Paul was darkened but he thought he was doing the right thing. Where were you spiritually before receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour, which kind of life did you have, which kind of person were you? Even if you were brought up in a Christian home like some of us here, what caused you to begin considering God as a solution to your needs? Some will tell you that 'I was on the edge, life was collapsing around me', or that 'I was going round in circles without any purpose in life'. For me it was a matter of letting God guide my life instead of me trying to be in control of things, the way I planned it. Whatever it is, tell that person and you will realise how they are getting more and more interested in what you have to say.

[Verses 12-18](#) takes us into the second section which describe **Paul's Conversion** and how he came to Christ. Paul was on his way to Damascus to do what he did best at the time, persecute Christians. Little did he know that this journey was going to be a life changing one for him because Christ appeared to him and appointed him to be His servant and spokesperson. This experience convinced Paul that Jesus whom he had persecuted was alive and had sent him both to the Jews and also to the Gentiles. Like Paul, we are servants and witnesses of Christ to a dying world where we are to shine and enlighten those who live in darkness.

We must admit that Paul's conversion is very dramatic and can make ours seem ridiculous but as I said earlier our story is important and will be used to bring people to Christ if we are faithful in sharing it and relying on God's Spirit.

What happened that finally motivated you to receive Christ in your life? Was it that you have seen your guilt and misery, and realised an abundant need of such a Saviour. Paul was on the road to Damascus, how did it happen for you? Some people remember every single detail, for others it was a slow process, maybe after long years of friends and family praying for you. For me there are two events; one when I was 14 back home responding to a Billy Graham video projection and although I knew Jesus loved me, my commitment wasn't real because I wanted to do things my way. Then at 22, just after my birthday on the campus of Austin University in Texas, a student gathering with praise and worship I said Lord I give you the driving seat and stop interfering with your plans for my life.

The third section deals with **Paul's life after Christ** and can be found in verses 19-23. Paul went on to preach that people should repent, turn to God, and prove their repentance by their deeds. It is important to note here that faith and deeds are mentioned one after the other. Jesus said that people are sanctified by faith in Him, it is by faith that people come to believe in Him. Then Paul mentions that their faith is made complete by the fact that it produces fruit, their deeds. The Bible tells us that we should not be corrupt trees, but good trees instead which yield their fruit in season.

Paul's life was completely transformed as we see in his writings and the zeal that he had previously became a positive one, directed to build the church instead of destroying it. Can the same be said of us; 'he has a new heart and nature, a new love, disposition, and delight, and is not the man that formerly he was'.

During his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5 that we should be salt and light and in the same way that a city on a hill cannot be hidden, we should be a people set apart that makes a difference. We are called to shine and not live in privacy and obscurity under pretence of contemplation and deep meditation a bit like the Buddhist monks.

We shine by our good living, the way we walk, talk and act; all these must be evidence that we are indeed followers of Christ and not just Christians by name. The good deeds Paul mentions are not for us to boast about but to guide and edify others. Ultimately, as we shine, people will see that it's not us but the power of God's grace in us and they will thank Him and give Him all the glory. So how did your life begin to change after you trusted Christ and which kind of fruit do people see in your life?

However, Paul did not stop there; I suppose he wouldn't be this apostle full of zeal otherwise. In verse 27, Paul asks his listeners to respond to what they just heard and that's what King Agrippa did in verse 28. It's one thing to tell others about our story, but we must also challenge them to act on it personally. Can they relate to what you've just said or is it all a load of nonsense to them? They might respond in a positive way and ask you to tell them more or they might be hostile and reject what Jesus has to offer them. Nevertheless, they will never be able to change the fact that Jesus transformed you into a new creation and won't be able to challenge that either.

To conclude, I would like to encourage you to keep praying for that person and see it as a privilege to be able to share your story with them. What it means is that you have to put that person first and listen to them because this will let them know you care. Paul considered himself fortunate to stand before King Agrippa so we should indeed ask God to guide us as we care for and love that person whether they respond in a positive or negative way. Amen.