

SOMEBODY TESTIFY!
March 12, 2017 morning service
Acts 22:1-21

Hey, good to see all of you today. Acts 22, we are in the eighth message of the ten sermons written in Acts. So this morning we're going to preach on "Somebody Testify." Paul's fixin' to testify and as soon as I finish preaching today then I'm going to walk down this aisle right here and I'm going out to the welcome desk. If you're here today and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, never been saved, I want you to come see me right out there. I'm going to give the invitation in the foyer. If you've never joined this church then I want you to come join Olive Baptist Church. I've got a gift to give you if you're a guest or you joined the church or you come by. If you're just a regular member, it'll cost you \$5. It's a little book called *The God Questions* by Hal Seed. We've had some of these left over from our Christmas time and I found them and I thought, we need to get those disbursed and people use those. It's a great little apologetics book, *The God Questions*, four of them. How can you trust the Bible? How do you know God's God? It's a great little book. My friend out in San Diego, Hal Seed, wrote this book.

So as soon as this service and I finish is over I want you to get up, walk right out there to the welcome center and we're going to take some next steps. The next step for somebody here is to trust the Lord. The next step for somebody is to be baptized. The next step for somebody is to join Olive Baptist Church. The next step for somebody is to repent of your sin, to get right with God. We'll take some next steps right out there this morning. We're going to have the invitation, not a come forward, but a go out invitation. Amen.

Everybody's doing well? Are you checking your watch? Did you run it up? Ok, the time's ok? Alright if I run way over, don't say anything, alright? Good. Brother Keith, you doing alright? Amen. Good. Everybody's well? Amen. You awake? You ready to go? Doing well, Ms. Helen? You look lovely today. Amen. Good, good. Just wanting to make everybody a little nervous is what I'm trying to do, alright? I just want you to be right there on the edge. I want you to stay with me this morning, okay? I know it's a kind of gloomy day and that kind of thing but I want you to know I have one of the joys of my life, I get to pastor the greatest church in America and I'm glad that you're here today. Now everybody doesn't agree with that but I'm the only one talking so that's okay. I'm glad you're here and I hope you feel good about your church and I hope somebody's ready to testify and talk about the Lord. If you haven't talked about the Lord this week then I want to encourage you today that you would do that.

I got encouraged this morning in our staff time. Shaun Pillay was over in India and met some folks that had been put in prison for the gospel. They told them, "If you will just denounce Jesus as being God, you can go home." And they wouldn't do it. So this morning we prayed for those four, three ladies and a man that are in jail, an eight

hour drive from the city where they were in Nepal. Now what are you complaining about? Amen?

Well Paul found himself in a mess like that when we come to the 21st chapter of Acts and then His sermon is found in the 22nd chapter of Acts. Paul has come to Jerusalem and as he gets there, the old guard of compromise rises up. They say, "Now, Paul, we've got these brothers and they are taking the oath of purification and we think you ought to do it too." He did. Then after the seven days of purification they went down to the synagogue in Jerusalem and while they were there, oh my soul, a riot broke out and they grabbed Paul and they carried him out in the street and the Bible says they shut the door to the synagogue, they took him out in the street and they started to beat the Apostle Paul.

The Roman heard the uproar, sent Centurions, a legion of officers and soldiers down and they got Paul out of the riot in chapter 21. They had to literally drag him away from the Jews that were about to kill him. They took him down to the barracks of the Centurion and evidently it's upstairs and they walked Paul up the stairs and when they got up the steps in chapter 21, the last verse of chapter 21 says: *And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect.*¹ He had asked the Centurion, "Can I speak?" He said, "You can." Paul, standing on the steps, waved his hand and they got quiet. To his Jewish countrymen, his Jewish adversaries he said these words:

"Brethren and fathers, hear my [apologia, my apologetic, not my apology but my] defense which I now offer to you."

And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city [Jerusalem], educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. I persecuted this Way [that's what the Christians were known as, I persecuted this Way] to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

"But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' [That's one of the greatest questions in the Bible. Who are You, Lord? He knew who it was. Who is this?] And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' And those who were with me saw the

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light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

"It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.' And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

Then notice the next verse. They listened to him up to that point, that statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!" They grabbed him trying again to kill him but the soldiers took care of him. Paul gave his testimony standing on the steps to his Jewish friends.

I have a question for you today. Number one. Do you have a testimony? Secondly, are you telling your testimony? This week I preached on Wednesday morning in Scottsboro, Alabama. Then on Thursday I attended the funeral for Mr. Jay E. Edmonds, 93 years old, a deacon at the Pisgah church. He signed my ordination certificate. One of the faithful, faithful educators, teachers, principals, leader in the community, oldest man in Pisgah church. Not the oldest person but the oldest man. This morning when they meet, my father is the oldest man in the Pisgah church. He stepped into J.E.'s shoes.

I attended the funeral. The first time, David, I've been to a funeral I think in 30 years that I didn't preach it or have something to do with it. I just went to church and I sat two seats behind the man who coached me as a senior boy in high school basketball. He's 70 years old now, lost. As we walked out in front of the church he looked down at me – because he's a big man. He said, "It's good to see you." I said, "Coach, you've been telling me how old you are. I'm praying for you because just like J.E. had his funeral, we're going to have a funeral for you one of these days and I want to know are you ready to die?" He didn't know what to do with that. I didn't know what

to do with it. I was just trying to give witness to Jesus and eternity and working my testimony into – do you have a testimony? Are you telling your testimony?

Well this morning I want to cover that for you. If you don't have a testimony I want you to get one right out here in the foyer right after this service. I want you to trust the Lord to have a testimony. If you have a testimony but you're not telling it, I'm praying today that somebody would this day be inspired and encouraged, emboldened to tell your testimony this week to somebody, somewhere about what Jesus has done for you.

So let's learn from Paul. How did Paul give his testimony? Every testimony has got to have at least three parts to it. Number one. A past of sin. Now everybody in here can testify that you've got a past of sin. We've all sinned. In this text we find that Paul spoke of his sin. Look in verse number 3. He said, "I'm a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel strictly according to the law of the fathers, being jealous for God just as you all are today." He's saying, "I am religious." Let me tell you, friend. He was religious but lost. He went to church but he wasn't going to heaven. Just because you come to church doesn't make you a Christian. This was the most religious man you'll find in the pages of scripture.

Verse 4 says Paul went on to say, "While I was very religious I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prison." While he was religious and lost, he was yet a vile murderer and a hater of Christians. Dear friend, you were made by God for God but sin has spoiled you and if you are without Christ, sin controls you. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that verse that many of us know that we have all sinned. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of Almighty God. We're not only sinners, we are rebels against God. We are guilty. We are defiled. We are degenerate. We are helpless in our own self-centeredness. The best you can do is miss the mark of Christianity. You can't do it by – so let's just all get it together of understanding that we have a past of sin. Look at your neighbor and say, "I'm a sinner." Amen. You didn't say that as loud as the other thing I asked you to say a while ago. It's kind of hard to even get it out, isn't it? But you understand, friend, that we've all sinned. That includes you and you and you and you. That's me. We've all sinned and we're short of getting to God's glory.

You've got to tell your story beginning with a past of sin. Secondly, in Paul's life and not only in your life is there a past of sin, there's a point of obedience. It's when you come face to face with your lostness and Jesus' solution and you will say yes unto Him. Look in verse number 10 of our text if you would. Paul is telling his story. "I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' When that light came on and I said, 'Jesus, what do I do?' And the Lord said, 'Get up, go into Damascus and there you'll be told all that has been appointed for you to do.'"

He couldn't get there on his own and he was helped. Ananias came and told him what he needed to do and his eyes were open and Paul believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a light. There was a voice. There was a confession.

What shall I do? What do you do when you find yourself lost? You must embrace Christ. We must believe. We must trust and when we do, listen to me. When you trust Him, you are rescued from your sinfulness. God takes you out of sin and puts you into salvation. He rescues you. Past, present, future.

First in your past. Our sin, our guilt, and our condemnation gone. It is forgiven. You are in Christ and your past sin has been dealt with. Presently we are rescued from the power of sin's down-dragging dynamic. Sin will drag you down but when you come into Christ some of us want to live down. I'm telling you, you need to live up to everything this book says about you. That's your testimony, that you're an overcomer. That this point of obedience leads you to have your past sin forgiven, your present sin. There is victory. Let me tell you that in the future you'll be rescued from the very presence and preserved from sin's power in a life to come. You're not perfect yet but you will be. God's sanctifying you now. You're different than when you were lost. When you were lost sin had his grip on you but when you're saved, sin's grip is let go and there is victory. You need to live up to all that Christ says about you in your life.

Have you got any victory in your life? There is a past of sin. There is then to be a point of obedience. Now everybody in here, put your phone down, everything. I want you to look right here. I want you to look right here. Everybody. In a Baptist church on a Sunday morning, can you tell me right now at 14 minutes after 10:00 can you tell me the very moment you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? You say, "Preacher, I can't do it." Then you need to meet me right out there this morning. You say, "Well, it was way back, you know, my momma said." Let me tell you, your momma's not going to be there with you. Every man will answer for himself. Every woman must stand before God for herself. Can you tell me when you were born for the first time? Yeah, you don't remember. They gave you a birth certificate and it's there.

This week I had a financial summit with my mother and father. On Thursday we went to the safety deposit box. I saw my daddy's birth certificate. I'd never seen it before. I thought it was part of the Bible on parchment. I said to him, "Did they even have pens back then?" He said, "It's typed on there. Look at it." You've got a date of birth. Do you have a date of second birth? Can you tell me? It was June on a Thursday at Vacation Bible School for me, 1963. Can you tell me? Friend, I'm telling you, if you don't know that you know you know, you'll never tell anybody else what you don't know. You've got to know that you've trusted Christ. He's forgiven your sin. He's gotten it out of your life. He's given you victory. That's my day so that when you come to die some preacher can say, "Yes, he trusted Christ. He was 21 or 15."

Last Monday night I was knocking doors in Pensacola. I went up to a guy's house. They visited our church last Sunday for the first time. I asked him, "Can you tell me a time you trusted Christ?" He stood straight up. He said, "Yes, sir. It was August." And he gave me the exact date and year. You may not know the very day on the calendar but you'll know if it was a Thursday at a revival or a Sunday at Old Hickory Baptist Church. You'll know because I'm telling you, when God moves in it's a life changing day. Some of you have swallowed the lie of the devil. "You know, preacher,

I've just always been a Christian." No. You must become one and when you do you must remember a day of salvation.

Paul had a past of sin. That's the first part, his testimony. Secondly, he had a point of obedience. Thirdly, watch this. He then had a life of discipleship. A life of discipleship. Look down in verse 16. Ananias was speaking to him and said, "Why do you delay? Get up and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on His name." Do it N-O-W, now. Do it now. Do it now. Get up and do it now. Some of you, when I walk out, you need to get up out of your seat and do it today. You need to do it now. This is not just going to be time change Sunday. It'll be life change Sunday. God'll save you and will then begin to walk in a life of discipleship.

Paul had an obedience to get saved. He was going to please God and then going to exalt God. Now after you get saved you should grow in your life. There should be growth in your life. G-R-O-W-T-H. Let's look at these six things I want you to see out of that acrostic, G-R-O-W-T-H. Number one, if you're going to grow, you need to go to God daily in prayer. You need to pray daily. We're in 40 days of prayer and fasting right now, leading up to Easter. I hope you're spending some time, some meals, some days when you just push away from the table and open the word of God.

You ought to go to God daily in prayer. Are you a daily prayer person? Friend, if you're going to grow in your faith you need to go to God daily in prayer. You say, "I don't even know how to do it." Well just get in a quiet place, turn off the television, turn your phone off, and speak to the Father. R, you need to read His word daily. Be a daily Bible reader. I'm reading through the New Testament a few times this year. I'm in the book of Ephesians this week and just reading through Ephesians. That's where I am. That's the way I'm doing my daily Bible reading. I don't know what you're doing but you ought to read his word daily.

Number three, after you go to God daily in prayer, you read His word daily, O, you obey God moment by moment. You see Ananias in here. He's saying to him, "Go right now." Some of you have been saved but you've never been baptized by immersion. You've never been baptized and you ought to be – you say, "Pastor, I was sprinkled when I was a baby." I'm here to tell you, infant baptism is not New Testament baptism. It's a different mode and a different time. That's something your parents did for you. When you're baptized to follow Christ and baptized by immersion, that's something you do, not something someone else does for you. Jesus was baptized by immersion. Paul was baptized by immersion. I'm telling you, you ought to be baptized by immersion.

You ought to obey God moment by moment. One of the first things you ought to do is believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, trust Him, ask Him to come into your heart and save you, then be baptized. Then when God speaks to you, when God says do it, do it. When He says obey, obey. You say, "Man, I'm scared. It doesn't make sense." I'm just telling you, obey God. Obey Him. Do what He tells you to do and you'll

find growth will begin to come in your life when you step out and do what God calls you to do. You've got to learn to obey. Amen.

You see, friend, in every person's heart there is a throne. There's a throne in every heart and if you are on the throne of your life, Jesus is still on the cross but if Jesus is on the throne of your life, you are on the cross. You've died to yourself and enthroned Him and you are moment by moment obeying Him because He sits as King in your life.

Go to God daily in prayer, read His word daily, obey God moment by moment, W, witness for Christ. We've talked about that. That's why I'm trying to get you to know your testimony this morning so you can give a witness for Jesus. You can have gospel conversations. You can speak to people about your faith and just be conversing with them, giving out one of those True Life cards that we share and give away. Just talking to people about the Lord. Amen? You ought to be doing that.

G-R-O-W-T, T, trust God for every detail. Trust Him for every detail of your life. I Peter 5:7 says you're casting all your cares, all your cares over on Jesus. Can I just be transparent with you for just a moment? I had a long week and I've been dealing with this trusting God for every detail of your life. I'm an only child of two great parents that are 91 and mother will be 86 Monday. Sometimes I get to worrying, sinning because if something happens up there six hours from here, who's going to take care of that and how do I deal with my parents a long way from here? Don't come talk to me about this after church, alright? Don't come up to me and say, "Oh, pastor, you ought to have your parents move down here." You go talk to my momma. Amen? I'll turn Ms. Jean over to you. They don't need to come down here. They've got all their friends here. They're doing well but the day might come.

I found myself. I was walking in Pisgah, walking around that circle early in the morning. I get up at 5:30. I was walking just barely daylight and I was walking and I just stopped. I said, "Lord, it was on this road right here where You called me to preach. It was right there in that ditch where I surrendered. I rolled over out of that car and just said, "God, I give up. I'll do whatever You want me to do." I said, "Lord, I'm back on that same road. I'm standing by that same ditch and I'm worrying again." I said, "Lord, this time it's not my call to ministry. It's my parents." I said, "Lord, You've taken pretty good care of me all my life. I'm just going to trust you with Delton and Jean today. Lord, we'll do whatever we need to do. I'm just going to trust You for every detail of life. That includes my parents." I said, "Lord, whether they bury me or I bury them, I'm just going to trust You."

I just gave that to the Lord God. I just gave it to Him. Friend, I'm telling you, you've got some stuff in your life you're carrying on your back. You need to get rid of that. Have a plan. We had a financial summit on Thursday. We laid out everything. We dealt with all that. I got my name signed on everything I needed to have and power of attorney. It felt pretty good, Keith. I'd never been an attorney before. I was ready to go. You know, getting all that signed up.

What are you worrying about today? Let me tell you, part of your testimony is trusting God for every detail of your life, every moment, every day. G-R-O-W-T, and H, this is a prayer. Holy Spirit, master me. Holy Spirit, master me. Control me. "Father, I lay my life over into Your hands. Holy Spirit of God, come and be the master of my life." Friend, when you get all wrapped up in yourself, you're not a very big package. You need to get wrapped up in the Lord Jesus. Let Him control you. Let Him have you and say, "Holy Spirit of God, fill me. Flood me. Sanctify me. Make me a usable vessel. Oh, Holy Spirit of God, I want to grow in You."

Then I want you to notice in this text. Paul's standing on these steps and he's giving a sermon. He's telling all of these things and you get down to verse 21 and then he said, "Go, for I will send you away to the Gentiles." Saul became Paul when he went after the Gentiles. Saul was his Hebrew name. Paul was his Gentile name. That's when these people got angry is when he said, "I'm going after the Gentiles, not just the Jews but I'm going after the Gentiles," and they rushed upon Him. They came. They were angry because He was going to take the gospel to the whole world. You find Paul from that point on, he's in a war. People were trying to kill him every time he turned the corner because He went to the Gentiles.

I want to ask you, who are you going to? You want to know what's wrong with most Baptist churches? They're playing it so safe God can't use them. That's the problem. Who are you going after? Who is it that you have got a testimony to give to this week? Friend, when we play it safe, we just kind of hunker down in our little closet. Somebody testify. Somebody speak out what God's done in your life. You say, "Pastor, I'm just not sure I've got anything to say." I've got great news. If you meet me out there at that table we'll find a testimony today. If you've never joined this church, meet me out there at that table today. If you've never been baptized, meet me out there at that table today. Today's your day. It's the day to do it. Now's the time. Today's the day. I know you got up early today and you stayed up late last night and you're a little weary. I can tell by looking at you. Man, it's the day the Lord's made. I know it's a little rainy outside but we're not having church outside. We're in here. I know it's a little dreary. Let me tell you, friend, Jesus is still on His throne. You need to trust Him today. My Lord, somebody ought to testify in this place today. Somebody ought to say, "Amen."

I want to say to the people that are watching us by Internet today, by television, listening by radio. If you have never asked Christ to step out of heaven and step into your heart, let today be that day that you would do that. You're there at home and couldn't get out today. You say, "Pastor, I'm just not sure I've got a testimony." When you turn off that machine, just bow your heart toward heaven and pray, "O God, come into my heart. Forgive my sin and save me." I'm here to tell you, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. He'll do that for you today. Will He do it, church? Yes, indeed He will and I pray you'll let us know that He's done that for you.