

## How to Give a Testimony to Grace

### Acts 22:1-11

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 3-8-2009

## **Introduction – God made Paul, a man of “unbelief” and the “chief” of sinners, to be “a pattern to those who are going to believe in Him for everlasting life” (1 Tim. 1:12-17)**

In 1 Timothy 1 Paul says that his conversion is a pattern for all believers. He says that it was sovereign grace that gave him faith to receive salvation. It was sovereign grace that opened his eyes. It was sovereign grace that enabled him to be God focused. And Paul wants his testimony to be the testimony of all believers. And I think this is a great passage here to show how Paul’s testimony to salvation really can be a pattern for how we give our testimonies. His experience of grace can be a pattern for how others receive grace.

And I see three main things in these first eleven verses: 1) establish common ground, 2) confront sin, and 3) magnify God’s grace. I think if we do those three, we will be faithful witnesses.

### **I. Establish common ground – Paul looked for the social, historical, mental, emotional and religious keys to their hearts (vv. 1-3)**

#### ***A. He was polite (v. 1a)***

The first point is, “establish common ground.” When you understand how different sovereign grace is from any other human conception, that may not seem like a necessary step. Why not just offensively dump the message on them that they are headed to hell and leave God to pick up the pieces? It is the way some people evangelize. But Paul did not. He always sought to establish some common ground. In this passage we see that Paul was looking for social, historical, mental, emotional and religious keys to getting a hearing. He wanted to get a hearing for the message.

And the first part of getting that hearing was to be polite. He says, “**Brethren and fathers.**” Let me tell you something – if you’ve just been roughed up by a mob like Paul was, those are likely not the first words to come off your lips. And off of some people’s lips, they would probably not be repeatable words. But Paul has matured a lot in the last few years. He has

incredible self-control, and he starts polite and continues to be polite throughout this passage. To me that is astonishing because after being roughed up, a man's adrenaline kicks in, and he is ready to fight. God made us that way, and there are times when it is perfectly appropriate to fight. I read a biography of one lumberjack from the 1800's in northern Minnesota who was called to an evangelistic ministry. In fact, I love the biography of this guy. He was a scrapper. And he won the respect of the lumberjacks that he preached to by beating them up on occasion. He was a tough guy. But the point is, they respected him for his courage and gave him a hearing. The same courage enabled Paul to politely preach despite getting roughed up. And you have to admire that in Paul. And I would have to say that if you have a choice between fighting and being polite, being polite is generally going to get you a better hearing – though not always.

***B. He asked for a hearing and gave a credible defense (v. 1b – “apologia”)***

The second thing Paul did was to *ask* for a hearing. Paul could have been tempted to think that there was no point in even talking to these people. They have shown that they hate him. But I find it interesting that he doesn't make that assumption. He at least tries. He asks for a hearing.

Now psychologically this puts the crowd in a position where they are more likely to listen. No one likes to be thought of as unreasonable, and his gracious appeal to an innate sense of decency in them actually worked. They listened. He said, “**Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.**” The word for defense is *apologia* – what we get apologetics from. And when the apostle Peter shows us how to do apologetics in 1 Peter 3:15 he says that our lifestyle and our demeanor are a big part of defending the faith. If your life does not line up in some way with what you are preaching, your message will not be effective. But Peter especially emphasizes the first two points – to be polite, and to be ready to give a defense in any circumstance. The worst that they can do is to kill you. But actually, here he is safe in the Roman command, and it doesn't hurt to try to give an apologetic. And to me this shows the presence of mind in Paul – that he is even willing to try.

***C. Spoke their language (21:37; 22: 2)***

The third thing that Paul does was to speak the language of the people he is ministering to. Look at the previous chapter, verse 37. “**Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?”** [So there is the first point of politeness] **He replied, ‘Can**

**you speak Greek?”** The guy is surprised that Paul speaks so well in his language. He’s able to connect with him in a language that he is comfortable speaking. So he speaks good Greek when talking to Gentiles.

But look at the instant switch in chapter 22:2. And it’s this switch between languages that I want to talk about. Though the Jews know Greek too, Paul speaks to them in *their* most comfortable language. **“And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.”** Paul was in effect identifying with them in their language. He is seeking common ground.

When talking to the Roman commander, he speaks in a very sophisticated Greek (and one commentator pointed out that the Greek of verse 39 is a specific kind of Greek that officers and well-educated people would have been familiar with). However, when talking to the Jews, he speaks in Hebrew. And I think this is a tip that we need to follow in our communication. Know your crowd.

There are some who have said that literal Bible translations are a stumbling block to unbelievers because of all the technical terms. They have said that we should ditch theological terms and opt for fifth grade grammar and vocabulary. There are some who say the same about preaching to the church – that it should never use theological terms that unbelievers will not understand. And so the preaching needs to be focused down to the lowest common denominator.

And there is an element of truth to that. But they are using only half the equation of knowing your crowd. Evangelistic preaching to unbelievers is quite different from discipleship preaching in-house. They are different crowds. Noel Weeks, in an article on Biblical language, points out that when the apostles addressed the church, they used in-house jargon that unbelievers absolutely would not have been familiar with. These theological terms in the Scripture were not part of Koine Greek. But you see, the Scriptures want us to adjust our speech to the group that we are in.

Let me illustrate. If you are an apprentice to a plumber, it just won’t do to ask for the thingamagiggy that looks sort of like this and does such and such. You’ve got to learn the in-house terminology of plumbers or you will frustrate everybody you’re working with. The same is true of mechanics and the nurses in an operating room. I wouldn’t want a medical team operating on me if everyone didn’t know the names of the operating instruments. I can just see the doctor with his hands in my abdomen saying, “No. No. The third one from the left. The one with the second smallest hook, and a red mark on

the handle.” That would be a disaster asking to happen. Technical terminology is a useful shortcut that (at least on the operating table) could mean the difference between life and death. When I’m talking to philosophers (and I am currently witnessing to a couple of philosophers about the Gospel) my emails will be incredibly cumbersome if I don’t adopt their philosophical jargon, which form a short cut in speech. Sometimes one word can summarize a paragraph. I won’t be effective in my dialogue if I don’t know the terms of the trade.

And the same is true of the church. God wants Christians to learn the language of theology and praxis, and the bible is full of technical terms for both. And yes we have to explain what justification, sanctification and glorification mean. There is always an initial learning curve for those who are joining any group. But if I never train you in those terms, and I only used terms that I use with unbelievers, this church would be the poorer for it. Of course, I shouldn’t go overboard and use the language of the seminary too much. But there is nothing wrong with the church being a different language and culture than the world. Scripture assumes that it will be. Paul looked a little bit weird to the Romans with his shaved head and his Jewish garments. It’s impossible to 100% fit in if we are faithfully fulfilling our calling. But when we dialogue with unbelievers, we need to speak their language to the best of our ability. Once they are converted, we will need to help them learn the language of the bible.

#### ***D. Identifies with them culturally (v. 3)***

The fourth thing that Paul does is to identify with the Jews culturally. Paul says, “**I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel.**” He is in effect saying, “I used to live two blocks down that road. I went to Central High. I’ve spent a lot of years in your great city. I’m a Jew. I’m one of you.”

Scott’s got a friend who apparently is very effective in reaching out to bikers. He definitely looks the part with his leathers and his gorgeous bike. He’s identifying with them culturally. Why? God’s called him to that group.

#### ***E. Identifies with a common hero (v. 3)***

But in verse 3 he also identifies with a common hero. Paul says that he had been taught by Gamaliel. Gamaliel was the most famous Jewish rabbi ever. Paul studied under him and could engage any rabbi in intelligent debate.

It's sort of like the testimony that Ralph Drollinger was able to give when he served as the executive director of Sports Outreach America. How could he connect with sports teams? Easily. This 7'2" man was the first player in NCAA history to go to the Final Four Tournament four years in a row. He was a member of two national championship teams, playing under the legendary Coach John Wooden. He played a pivotal role in helping Coach Wooden's team win their last game and thus win the championship. He's got instant recognition and connection in the Sports arena, even though he is a Christian evangelist. He's now heading up Capitol Ministries, ministering to politicians all over the states. But he's had to change how he dresses and how he relates to people.

But back when he had a sports ministry, instead of saying like Paul did, "I studied under Gamaliel," he could say, "I played under Coach Wooden." That made an instant connection.

***F. Identifies with their zeal for the law (v. 3)***

Point F shows how he identified with their zeal for the law and how he could understand their animosity toward him. He too was zealous for the law and had a similar animosity toward Christians. He's in effect saying, "I know exactly where you are coming from. Look at verse 3." He says, "...**taught according to strictness of our father's law...**"

***G. Gives them the benefit of the doubt for sincerity (v. 3)***

"...**and was zealous toward God as you all are today.**" He doesn't instantly dive into the way in which they are wrong. He gives them the benefit of the doubt for at least being sincere.

I point all of this out because it is easy to go to extremes on the issue of establishing common ground. One extreme is to not care. The other extreme is to be so focused on ministering to one subgroup or subculture that you distance yourself from all other sub-cultures or even the mainstream culture. Paul didn't do that. He didn't so immerse himself in one culture that he couldn't show common ground to another culture. He had a great balance of identifying himself with Christ (first and foremost), yet trying (where possible) to reach out to unbelievers.

## II. **Confront sin in yourself and in others - Paul did not glorify his past life of sin, but neither did he ignore it (vv. 4-5)**

### ***A. He too had persecuted the Christians (v. 4)***

The second main lesson that I learn from this passage is that we need to confront sin if we are to faithfully preach the good news. If there is no bad news of the law, the good news doesn't make sense and seems irrelevant. He's going to be speaking of the sinfulness of sin more in later verses, but I just want to focus on verses 4-5 to show how Paul saw himself as a great sinner, but in the process of pointing out his own sin, he brilliantly exposes their sin without being insulting. I think this is a great little talk here.

Verse 4 – **“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”** To admit to being a persecutor is not flattering to Paul. “I persecuted” not a good word. Yet that is precisely what these guys are doing to him. They are persecuting this way. But the way Paul phrases it makes it clear that Paul is not being holier than thou.

Persecuting to the *death* is admitting that he was guilty of *murder*. So Paul is being serious about his own sin. But what has this crowd just tried to do? They have just tried to kill him. And so Paul is also exposing the error of what they have just done. Binding men and women and delivering to prison is yet another sin against the Savior that Paul admits to.

The way Paul preaches against sin is that he has one finger pointed at them, but three fingers pointing back at him. He identifies with their sin in order to show them that they too can change; in order to show them that he is not writing them off, but is welcoming sinners into the fold; in order to show that Christians are sinners saved by grace. So it's not just a case of confronting sin, but of confronting sin in a humble way. And even if you have been a believer all your life, you can still have an attitude of “There but for the grace of God go I. It's not because I am so good that I am saved, but because Jesus is so good.” Can you see that?

### ***B. He too had followed the lead of the Sanhedrin (v. 5)***

In verse 5 he shows that he too had followed the lead of the Sanhedrin. There may be leaders who have stirred up this crowd to their sin. Paul had been authorized to do the same.

“...as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, [in other words. “You can check out my story for yourself. I was once in cahoots with the council of the elders. I was on that council.” Continuing to read in verse 5:] **from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.**” Paul is showing that he is not ignorant. He was part of the in-crowd. He knows more than they do. And he is telling them that what the leaders are saying is wrong.

*C. He too had totally misunderstood Jesus.*

He too had totally misunderstood Jesus. So Paul is establishing a basis for calling them out of their sin and taking away any argument that someone might bring up that he doesn't know what he is talking about. He was part of the in-circle. He knows exactly what he is talking about.

*D. In the process, Paul implicates everyone in the sin of rebellion against Jesus.*

And in the process he brilliantly leaves everyone without excuse, as rebels against the same God had who converted him.

**III. Magnify the grace of God - It was clear that Paul was totally captured by God's sovereign grace (vv. 6-11)**

*A. It was a supernatural work of God that was “monergistic” – 100% of God (v. 6)*

Which brings us to the third main aspect of Paul's testimony – that it magnified the grace of God. It is clear that Paul was totally captured by God's sovereign grace. Look at verse 6. “**Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.**” Paul was not seeking Christ. In fact, Paul was doing his utmost to extinguish the influence of Christ upon the earth. *But God was seeking Paul.* And that's what sovereign grace is all about. We call it monergistic, which is a theological term made up of two Greek words – monos meaning only one and ergos meaning working. Only God was at work in Paul's salvation. Paul didn't contribute one little thing. It started from heaven, God seeking man. It didn't start from earth with Paul seeking God. No. Paul was born from above.

And I believe this is the only Gospel that fully glorifies and magnifies the grace of God. All other gospels leave some glory for man in the recipe.

***B. Sovereign grace always humbles man (v. 7a – “I fell to the ground”)***

A second thing that we see about this sovereign grace is that it humbles the pride of man. Pride hates the idea that God chooses some and rejects others. Pride hates predestination, unconditional election, regeneration, faith as being a gift, and every other part of the full Gospel of God. Why? Because it leaves us out of the equation. It is Grace alone, Christ alone and to the glory of God alone.

And I think God’s humbling work is so perfectly illustrated by what happens in verse 7 – “**And I fell to the ground.**” That is the goal of God’s grace – to humble the pride of man. And it is only when we are humbled that we are lifted up. It is only when we realize that we are sinful rebels in need of mercy that God’s joy replaces the terror. Sovereign grace always humbles man. Never be afraid about speaking with unbelievers about the sovereign grace of God. I have read some Reformed writers who have treated sovereign grace as an in-house secret that we need to keep a secret. One pastor told me to never speak of sovereign grace to unbelievers because it might make them stumble. But Jesus and Paul constantly preached about predestination and sovereign grace to unbelievers. It is a powerful tool to bring people to humility and prepare them for the Gospel. Of course, if they are not elect, they will probably string you up and beat you. But preach it anyway, and make sure you’ve got some Romans to protect you. ☺

***C. Sovereign grace is personal, not simply corporate (v. 7 – “and heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, Saul’”)***

The third way that we see God’s grace being magnified is that Sovereign grace is not just a general call of the Gospel that leaves me as an individual a little place to hide. No. God gets in our face and deals with us individually, and pokes His finger into our own personal sins. It feels as if the pastor is preaching just to me. Verse 7 goes on to say, “...**and heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, Saul.’**”

There’s no hiding here. God’s got his name. When you come face to face with God speaking to your heart you cannot help but know what your answer will be. And it’s going to be an unconditional surrender. That’s what conversion is: unconditional surrender.



***D. Sovereign grace always gives a Christ centered view of sin, not a self-esteem perspective (v. 7b)***

Point D – sovereign grace always gives a Christ-centered view of sin, not a self-esteem perspective. In verse 7 Jesus says, “**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**” Notice that Jesus doesn’t come as a psychologist coming to help a troubled Saul. This is not first and foremost about saving Saul, helping Saul, or comforting Saul. He is confronting Saul with rebellion against Him. Notice that this is not Robert Schuller’s new Gospel of Self-Esteem and Nice-News. No. Paul is hearing bad news indeed. He is being accosted for persecuting God. We’ve got to be brought to a place where we say with David, “Again You, You only have I sinned.” When God regenerates the heart of a pagan, he fills that pagan’s heart with such dread of God’s awesome holiness and majesty that has been offended that he must flee to cross. There will be no other place than the cross to hide from God’s wrath.

Men must hear the bad news that God is offended by our sins before the Good News will even make sense. When we turn the Gospel into a psychological message of self-help, peace, hope, confidence and fulfillment, it becomes a man-centered message rather than a Christ-centered one. All sin is rebellion against Christ. Certainly sin hurts us, but that’s not the primary message. The primary message of the law is that man is in deep trouble with God. And we must be ever so careful that we do not turn the message of the Gospel into a man-centered Gospel. When Jesus preached the Gospel, he said, “Repent.” Why? Because God is offended; because Christ is persecuted.

By the way, how is it that Jesus can say that Paul was persecuting Him? And the answer is that Jesus is so united to those who put their faith in Him, that anything that is done to you and me is done to Him. He somehow experiences our sufferings. That’s how closely He identifies to His people.

***E. Paul’s confrontation was totally unexpected (v. 8)***

Fifth, this confrontation was totally unexpected by Paul. Verse 8 says, “**So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’**” Paul didn’t have a clue what was happening to him. He didn’t even have a clue as to who was speaking to him. This is not a case of man seeking after God, but of God seeking after man. Paul was running full tilt *away* from Christ when Christ knocks him off his horse and turns him around 180°. This is not semi-Pelagian grace. This is Sovereign grace.

***F. Paul was bold to use the name of Jesus and did not present Jesus as a “soft Jesus” (v. 8)***

And I want you to notice the name that Jesus gives to Himself. Verse 8 says, “**And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’**” The name Jesus was already not politically correct to use in Israel, just as it is fast becoming not politically incorrect to pray in Jesus name in all branches of the military. But Jesus adds to the offense. He calls Himself Jesus of Nazareth. If Galilee was the most despised state in Israel, Nazareth was the most despised town in Galilee. That’s why Nathaniel said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” So I find it significant that Jesus deliberately uses the most despised name that people had hurled at Him during His ministry. Nazareth was a term of rejection. And Jesus is indicating that until people lose all shame of identifying with Him, they are not saved. Jesus said, “**For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.**” (Mark 8:38). Is there anything that you are ashamed of in the Bible?

Well, Paul is not ashamed of Christ or of Christ’s words. There isn’t anything in the Bible that Paul is ashamed of. And neither should we be when we witness. Just realize that it doesn’t matter how convincing you are, but how sovereign God is. He’s the one that changes hearts anyway. So witness without shame and leave the results to God.

***G. Sovereign grace selects some and leaves others (v. 9)***

Verse 9 is symbolic of the fact that sovereign grace saves whomever God wants. It selects some and leaves others in their sin. “**And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.**” God made sure only Paul heard. They had enough light that they were without excuse, but not regenerating grace. God only picked one out of that group. And to those who say, “That’s not fair,” Paul answers in Romans 9

Romans 9:20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, “Why have you made me like this?”

Romans 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Romans 9:18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

That's sovereign grace – “whom He wills.” God's the one with the free will. When we turn the Gospel into a right, we make it man-centered rather than God-glorifying. When we insist that God *must* save, we turn the Gospel into a man-centered Gospel rather than one that shows forth God's sovereign mercy. Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism is thoroughly man-centered. Pelagianism believes that man can be perfect on his own, that grace can help, but that man doesn't need grace. Semi-Pelagianism believes man needs God's grace, but that man cooperates with God. Both are heresies.

***H. In order to find forgiveness and redemption he had to surrender to Jesus (v. 10a – “So I said, ‘What shall I do Lord?’”)***

What is the only response Paul can give to the true Gospel? And this is not too subtle when he is talking to this crowd. He is calling the hated Jesus, “Lord.” He says in verse 10, “**What shall I do Lord?**” God's grace brings Paul to total surrender. “What shall I do Lord?” Those are the words on the lips of every person when he is first saved, and from that point on, those should be the first words on our lips every morning. “What shall I do Lord?”

***I. Sovereign grace is Lordship grace (v. 10)***

Point I – Sovereign grace is Lordship grace. Not only does Paul call him Lord, but more importantly, in verse 10, God instantly makes demands upon the subjects that He has conquered. Verse 10 continues – “**And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’**” Paul is no longer his own. He is a subject under orders. Look at the words: arise, go, you will be told, appointed for you, do. He is under orders. And keep in mind that Paul said that his conversion story is a pattern for those who would believe. You cannot separate Christ's Lordship from His Saviorhood. Some people want to receive Him as Savior, but not receive Him as Lord. But that is a self-serving, man-centered, unbiblical view of salvation. And it doesn't follow the pattern of Paul's words. In Matthew 1:21 the angel tells Joseph, “**And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.**” The carnal Christian theory is as ridiculous as a rich man telling a poor man, be warm and clothed, but doing nothing about it. It is as ridiculous as telling a slave, you are free, but not taking him out of the slave keeper's hands. It is as ridiculous as telling a man up to his neck in a bog, “Don't worry, you are going to heaven after you drown.” No. God's grace rescues the person from Satan, and from the

penalty and power of sin, and then empowers that Christian to now be a joyful servant, son, soldier, farmer and ambassador for the kingdom.

Spiros Zodhiates tells the true story of a missionary who was speaking to a group of Hindu women. He was surprised to see one get up and walk away. Soon she returned and listened more intently than she did before. “Why did you leave in the middle of the message?” asked the missionary. She said, “I was so interested in the wonderful things you are saying that I went to ask your servant if you live like you teach. He said you do. So I came back to hear more about Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> Is our message a credible one? It will be if we have been saved unto Lordship.

***J. Sovereign grace does what it pleases with the subjects (v. 11) – definitely not a health and comfort message.***

Point J – Sovereign grace does what it pleased with the subjects that are now saved. We should not make promises “Trust Jesus and everything will be fine.” That’s a man-centered message that will let people down when things don’t go just fine. Verse 11 describes the first of a long series of sufferings that God sovereignly brings into Paul’s life: “**And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.**” According to chapter 9, Paul was blind for three days before being healed by Ananias. God struck him blind. This is all so strangely different from the fluffy, happy-clappy promises you sometimes hear on TV, that Rodney Chestnut wrote a spoof. Let me read it to you. He said,

The Host (immaculately dressed, hair perfect) is all smiles—”Today is a special day for the Christian Health & Wealth Show! We’re going to have a very special guest! He has done more for the cause of Christ than any other man! Ladies and gentlemen, would you please welcome ... Saint Paul the Apostle!” ... All eyes follow him as he slowly walks across the set. 1) HOST: “It’s a real thrill to have you on the show, Paul; or should I call you Saint or Apostle? Which do you prefer?” 2) PAUL: “Just Paul would be fine.” 3) HOST: “Very well, Paul. We’re all eager to hear what you, a great servant of the Lord, might have to say to us! Tell us about the wonderful things that happened to you when you invited the Lord Jesus into your life!” 4) PAUL: “Well, let’s see. First I was struck blind. I got over that but then somebody tried to kill me and I had to escape in a basket. Then they stoned me, threw me in jail, beat me with rods ...” 5) HOST: “Uh, Paul, heh, heh, I think you misunderstood. Tell us, what has the Lord done for you?” 6) PAUL: “That’s what I was doing! Then the Romans arrested me, I was

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<sup>1</sup> Spiros Zodhiates. Illustrations of Bible Truth. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1995). # 895

shipwrecked--a night and a day I spent in the deep ..." 7) HOST: "Uh, excuse us folks. It's time for our first commercial break."<sup>2</sup>

And Rodney Chestnut's point is that we must not present an unrealistic expectation of a comfortable Christian life to those we witness to. That's false advertizing. God is not just sovereign over salvation; He is also sovereign over what happens for the rest of our Christian walk. We can count on His being good. But we can't count on His fulfilling our every whim.

### ***K. Present salvation as a fact, not a feeling (v. 11ff)***

Which leads to subpoint K – present salvation as a fact, not a feeling. Paul believed the message of God and was saved, whether he felt like it or not; whether he received healing immediately or not; whether he felt fulfilled or not. Paul was saved because of the promise of Scripture that if we believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved from our sin and into God's kingdom.

And if you have not put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, I urge you to do so. Cast your sins upon Jesus, receive His righteousness by faith, and resolve to follow in His footsteps.

And someone might say, "I don't know if I am elect," I would say: "You will know that you are elect if you believe and surrender to Jesus." In John 6, Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who has sent me draws him." That is sovereign grace. But Jesus also said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (v. 37). So you can have assurance that if you come you have salvation and you will never cast out. So come.

### ***L. Be prepared for some people to reject your message (v. 22)***

The last thing that I want to mention is skipping ahead beyond next week's passage to verse 22. Be prepared for some people to reject your message. We don't know how many (or if any) believed from this crowd. But certainly the crowd as a whole did not. Verse 22 says, "**And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!'**" The moment he showed his willingness to work with the Gentiles (verse 21), their hatred for Gentiles from years of abuse erupted again, and they didn't want to hear another word. They were deaf to anything more he had to say.

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<sup>2</sup> Roddy Chestnut, in a sermon titled, "What Has God Done for You."

There will always be some things that will keep people from believing the Good News of the Gospel until God's sovereign grace reaches in and changes them. It may be anger or it may be apathy that keeps them from listening. It may be concern over poverty or concern over riches. But none of those things are a match for God's sovereign grace. Like the apostle Paul, God can take the biggest sinner, humble him, save him, and change to him.

And what we can be confident in is that our witness to neighbors, friends and strangers on an airplane is not in vain. Paul promises that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. In God's perfect timing God can take the testimony to grace that you have shared and pierce into the hearts of His elect and cause them to come to salvation. And what a thrill it will be when we get to heaven and discover that we have had a part in some person's salvation either by planting, watering or even reaping.

May each of us grow in our skill at testifying to God's grace. And may God bring birth to new lambs through you His sheep. If we imitate Paul we will seek common ground, we will confront sin, and we will magnify God's grace. And may God produce a harvest. Amen.

#### **IV. Calling (vv. 17-21) [next week]**

#### **Conclusion**

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- I. Establish common ground – Paul looked for the social, historical, mental, emotional and religious keys to their hearts (vv. 1-3)
  - A. He was polite (v. 1a)
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  - D. Identifies with them culturally (v. 3)
  - E. Identifies with a common hero (v. 3)
  - F. Identifies with their zeal for the law (v. 3)
  - G. Gives them the benefit of the doubt for sincerity (v. 3)
- II. Confront sin in yourself and in others - Paul did not glorify his past life of sin, but neither did he ignore it (vv. 4-5)
  - A. He too had persecuted the Christians (v. 4)
  - B. He too had followed the lead of the Sanhedrin (v. 5)
  - C. He too had totally misunderstood Jesus.
  - D. In the process, Paul implicates everyone in the sin of rebellion against Jesus.
- III. Magnify the grace of God - It was clear that Paul was totally captured by God’s sovereign grace (vv. 6-11)
  - A. It was a supernatural work of God that was “monergistic” – 100% of God (v. 6)
  - B. Sovereign grace always humbles man (v. 7a – “I fell to the ground”)
  - C. Sovereign grace is personal, not simply corporate (v. 7 – “and heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, Saul’”)
  - D. Sovereign grace always gives a Christ centered view of sin, not a self-esteem perspective (v. 7b)
  - E. Paul’s confrontation was totally unexpected (v. 8)
  - F. Paul was bold to use the name of Jesus and did not present Jesus as a “soft Jesus” (v. 8)
  - G. Sovereign grace selects some and leaves others (v. 9)
  - H. In order to find forgiveness and redemption he had to surrender to Jesus (v. 10a – “So I said, ‘What shall I do Lord?’”)
  - I. Sovereign grace is Lordship grace (v. 10)
  - J. Sovereign grace does what it pleases with the subjects (v. 11) – definitely not a health and comfort message.
  - K. Present salvation as a fact, not a feeling (v. 11ff)
  - L. Be prepared for some people to reject your message (v. 22)
- IV. Calling (vv. 17-21) [next week]

Conclusion