

### III. Focus 2 -- Paul's Testimony (20-23)

#### A. Paul's Testimony as Disclosed to Us in Verse 20

Paul understood that to obey Jesus' commission he would need to declare to an ever expanding audience that they should "repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."

##### 1. Paul's Testimony Included an Exhortation to Repent and Turn to God in Deed

a. **Repent** -- Change your mind, i.e., change the way you are **thinking**, and in particular thinking about God's Messiah

- **John** (who, by God's calling, was to prepare the way for the Savior God had promised): Mat 3:1-2: "Now in those days John the Baptist \*came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"
- **Jesus** (who was and is that promised Savior): [Matthew 4:17](#) -- "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"
- **Paul** (who was an appointed minister and witness of Jesus) says that his testimony shared in keeping with his calling from Jesus includes the exhortation to change your thinking in regards to Jesus, He is the Messiah Promised by God.
  - b. **And Turn to God** -- This exhortation implies that the people Paul was called to preach to were in some way oriented **away** from God. Since repentance is a change of mind, 'turning to God' implies **thinking correctly about God**, orienting yourself dead on to God, looking at him square in the face -- and that face is Jesus.

Before people hear the Gospel, they are "barking up the wrong tree", off the main path on a rabbit trail, clicking on links returned by search engines looking for the name 'God' but those links were taking them nowhere close to the real deal. Paul's testimony called for by God included this exhortation, "Turn to God!"

ILLUS. If I want to get out that door I have to walk at an angle exactly 90 degrees off this wall. If I'm off just a few degrees, I won't be making it through that door, I'll be banging my head into that wall. If a sailor leaves California headed for Hawaii they need to do better than head, 'basically West.' There is a lot of ocean on the North and South. The sailor needs to turn toward their destination with care and exactness. The people of Paul's day were pointed in a direction they called God, but God was not there. Instead He was there in the person of Jesus the Nazarene who was in fact the Christ, even though they did not recognize Him.

Trans. -- The people Paul was called to testify to needed to repent and turn to God. Brothers and sisters, you know what I'm going to say, the people who live in the darkness apart from the revelation of Jesus who we know, in our towns and our families on our mission fields need to repent and turn to God, Mat 7:13 "**Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.**" Will you shine the way? [Matthew 5:16](#) -- **Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

##### c. Performing Deeds Appropriate to Repentance

- The exhortation was to repent and turn to God, both orientations of the mind invisible to the eye. Can you tell a repentant man from an unrepentant man as they lie side by side asleep in their bunks? No. But when they arise you can. How? By their deeds.
- **ILLUS.** -- "Show me you'll have her home by 10, don't just tell me!" There is recognizable wisdom in the common sayings, "Talk is cheap. Put your money where your mouth is..." Show me you mean what you say!
- **James** -- "I will show you my faith by my works" (2:18b). "faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:26b).

- **John the Baptist** -- Mat 3: 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” 8 Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 10... every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (cf. Lk 3:8).
- What is a deed appropriate to repentance? What is an example of something done as a result of right thinking about Jesus being the Christ of God? Resist thinking about turning from some immoral action to a moral one at first. There is something more seminal. What deed is most essential and will be the soil out of which all other deeds will grow? Distinct from all the thousands of good deeds that would make God smile, what deed is the essential deed that God requires? It is faith. Repentance and turning to God requires faith, takes faith, is faith.

[Hebrews 11:6](#) -- “**And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**”

[Acts 16:31](#) -- [ The Jailer Converted ] They said, “ **Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.**”

[Romans 10:9](#) -- that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

Trans. -- **Paul’s Testimony Included an Exhortation to Repent and Turn to God In Deed. What else did Paul’s testimony include?**

## **B. Paul’s Testimony as Disclosed to Us in Verse 22**

1. Paul **limits the content** of his testimony to “**nothing but** what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place”

- Significant in that the Jews were charging Paul with just the opposite, with going against what the Prophets and Moses said. But Paul here states that what he testifies is “nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said...”
- Significant in that Paul’s testimony was not a different testimony than that God had already given to the Prophets and Moses but the same one, only now seen in light of Jesus as the Christ Moses and the Prophets had spoken of.
- Same thought is seen in 1 Cor 15 -- 1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins **according to the Scriptures**, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day **according to the Scriptures**,
- I almost don’t want to ask, because we may never get to the discussion I had originally intended, but, what are the implications to us that Paul’s testimony was “**nothing but...**”?

Jesus comes not out of the blue, some plan B; no, He comes as the fulfillment of God’s plan A. I wonder out loud, can we really testify of Him in a God honoring way except as the fulfillment of what the Prophets and Moses (as recorded in the OT Scriptures) have spoken? Certainly a man’s story is more interesting when we know it from the beginning. But when the man is Jesus and the Story is God’s, and it has its genesis in the book of Genesis, do we rightly bear witness of Jesus if we begin in Matthew and pay no attention to the beginning of the story? I’m not so sure we do! No, I’m sure we don’t!

Lord, help us bear witness of Jesus Christ as you have revealed Him in all the Scripture.

**Trans. --** Paul **limits the content** of his testimony to “**nothing but** what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place.” That was a limit to Paul, I propose that it should be a limit to us as well reigning in our propensity to talk about ourselves and goading us to talk about what God had promised and has fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Of course this ‘limit’ for many of us calls for an expansion of the content of the message we share about Christ. May we pursue and integrate what Moses and the Prophets said in the OT Scriptures about Christ and include that in our witness. Let’s look beyond the

limit to the content.

### C. Paul's Testimony as Disclosed to Us in Verse 23 -- Stated

Paul concisely states what Moses and the Prophets had indicated (and therefore what his testimony was):

1. that **"the Christ was to suffer"**
2. that **"He would be the first to proclaim light"**
3. that He would be the first to proclaim light... **"by reason of His resurrection from the dead"**
4. that He would proclaim light **"to the Jewish people and the Gentiles"**

Trans. -- Though we have here a concise statement of the content of Paul's gospel (testimony, witness, message...), we don't have (at least not at our first reading) a clear understanding of what that statement meant. I fear that if I took the elements of Paul's gospel as recorded here and shared them with your average person today, we would not have an effective communication event. Put yourself in the place of an unbeliever whom you know. Now let me try Paul's gospel as recorded here on you as that unbelieving person. You tell me how much understanding you gain. "The Christ was to suffer, He was the first to proclaim light; and He did so by reason of His resurrection from the dead and he did so to both Jews and Gentiles." The reason this concise statement of Paul's testimony is less than compelling to an unbeliever unfamiliar with these concepts and words is that the **meaning** is not as apparent to us as it would have been / could have been to King Agrippa and a thoughtful first century audience familiar with the Jewish people. What did Paul mean? The meaning is what we want to communicate when we share the gospel. It is not the magic of the particular words, it is the conveyance of the truth of the words. So we must pursue what Paul meant by what he said.

### D. Paul's Testimony as Disclosed to Us in Verse 23 -- Defined

What Paul Meant by What He Said

1. that **"the Christ was to suffer"** -- indicates... that God had all along revealed through Moses and the prophets He would send a uniquely anointed savior who would bring salvation from the just wrath of God and the estranged relationship with God from which all men suffer, not by means of His military conquest and earthy power (as one might naturally think), but by means of His suffering -- even His death as a substitutionary atoning sacrifice. "The Christ was to suffer."
2. that **"He would be the first to proclaim light"** -- indicates more than I will comment on but let me mention at least two things...

- First, looking back, this phrase means that up until Christ there had been no 'light' proclaimed (at least no 'light' in the sense of the word as it is used here). What is this new and different light that Christ would be the first to proclaim? Could it be The Light that is uniquely found in the person of Jesus Christ, a LIGHT that produces a LIFE that is also uniquely found in Jesus Christ, a LIFE that up until the time of Christ had not been available to mankind, a truly new LIFE? I think this is exactly the thought behind this phrase. Listen to these Scripture readings: regarding light: Gen 1:1-3; Psalm 27:1; Psalm 36:9; John 1:1-4; John 8:12; 2 Timothy 1:10. The Christ "would be the first to proclaim light" in the sense of **the unique light that yields the ultimate life God intends for us**, life that is distinct and different than the biological life with which we are familiar. Paul testified of the Christ who was the first to proclaim **THAT LIGHT AND LIFE!**
- Secondly, looking forward, this phrase indicates that **other people** would also proclaim this new light and life that is uniquely found in (and was first proclaimed by) Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts we have seen Jesus' disciples (after they themselves had been enlivened and empowered and illuminated by the indwelling Holy Spirit) proclaim this light that was unique to Jesus Christ. In the preaching of Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul... we have heard the proclamation of the light and life of Christ.

Trans. -- Paul's testimony included the fact that Jesus was the first to proclaim this unique light that leads to life, but He would not be the last, His disciples would likewise proclaim that light.

3. that He would be the first to proclaim light... **"by reason of His resurrection from the dead"** -- indicates... that the resurrection from the dead somehow enabled Jesus to proclaim the

unique light that yields the ultimate life. This is true both in substance and in the fact that the resurrection enabled effective communication of the light.

a. Effective Communication -- Dead men don't proclaim! But the resurrected Christ sure did! Back to, "Actions speak louder than words." It strikes me that the testimony of Jesus is made much more effective and compelling by His resurrection from the dead. Certainly the testimony of any man who says and then does accordingly carries more weight than that of a man who says but does not do as he said. Jesus had said he would suffer unto death and then rise from the dead. Having so risen it certainly makes it clear that we are not dealing with someone who is full of cheap talk but someone who forecasts miracles and then makes them happen. It certainly makes ME want to listen to and heed what Jesus has said. So the resurrection of Jesus gave voice to his proclamation of light -- like a good sound system it enabled effective communication. But even more than the communication value of the resurrection, the resurrection offered something of real substance that enabled His proclamation of light.

b. Substance -- Jesus was the first man who lived (never to die again) even though He had died. The resurrection proved that He had eternal life in victory over death, and he had it to give. John 1:4 again says: "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." I have come that they may have life...(John 10:10; cf. 1 Cor 15:45). Jesus' resurrection was unto life in its most ultimate expression both for Him and for those who would share in that life by virtue of their union with Him. Everything else had been shadows, Jesus came as the substance. He had accomplished God's purposes, suffered judgment and death, and been risen and will always live in perfect communion with God the Father and God the Spirit. That is resurrection life. That is the pure light He was the first to proclaim.

4. that He would proclaim that light "**to the Jewish people and the Gentiles**" -- indicates the prophesied albeit somehow unexpected global scope of the resurrection life available in the light of Jesus Christ. The Jewish pie chart of all humanity had only two pieces, Jews and Gentiles. The gospel Paul preached following in the footsteps of Jesus was preached to all humanity.

## **E. BODY BUILDING THE BODY**

As we did with the the first focus point, let me get you to weigh in on this point too. Verses 20-23 record how Paul spoke of His testimony.

Question: Trying to hold the content of Paul's gospel as recorded here, **how should you testify of what God has done in Christ Jesus?**