

COMMUNION SERVICE-OPENING CHARGE

TEXT: ACTS 22:1-21

TOPIC: YOUR TESTIMONY YOUR DEFENSE

- SUBTOPICS:**
- 1. When hostility mounts up-Paul's vs our case**
 - 2. Ever be ready with your defense**
 - 3. Compromise is dangerous-It destroys the gospel**

A certain writer/Author, Richard Warmbrand in his book "Tortured for Christ" said, "What a person really believes is not what he says in his creeds, but what he is willing to die for." He went on further to say that "The odds are that you will never be called upon to die for Christ. But the question is that if you are not willing to die for him, what are the chances that you are really living for him?"

Another writer says, "Jesus' blood, then the blood of the martyrs. That Jesus' blood was for our propitiation, while our blood is for propagation.

The apostle Paul writing to the Galatians says, "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law Christ died for nothing." Gal 2:21. He further admonished, "Put your faith in Christ, for that is the only way to be justified. The law does not justify. You are not justified by observing the law, but by your faith put in Christ." Gal 2:16

Earlier in Acts 22:24; Paul had declared:

"And now compelled by the Holy Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city, the Holy Spirit warns me, that prison and hardship are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me if only I may finish the race and complete the task of testifying to God's grace." This same Paul had declared-"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians1:21).

Racial sentiments lend Paul audience from his detractors when he said he was Jew.

But what did he say? His biography, then his testimony. He spoke of his early days, his involvement with persecution of the early church. His serving the old-man-Satan and his cohorts- the high priest, all the council- the Sanhedrin. He also told the crowd about his new master-Jesus Christ. His new assignment- preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and the Jews.

Paul was not imposed on the Gentiles. But was chosen and assigned by God. Meeting Christ, the right one, reversed his mind-set, changed his desires and aspirations. Changed his focus and direction, changed his passion and position. Destroyed the flesh and its agitations to arrest, torture and kill and filled him with the Holy Spirit thus casting away the thoughts and plans for wickedness, replacing them with inspiration for righteousness and thus for souls.

He told his Jewish brothers that I am not doing what my flesh loves to do, those days are gone and for good. I now live for Christ, dominated by the Holy Spirit, doing only what Christ and He the Spirit tells me to do. What they command me to do. You people are doing what I had done before and had no value for, what the law made me to do, and that very act the Holy Spirit had librated me from.

As a child of God and believer in Jesus Christ, and minister of the gospel you must always have your defense ready, your testimony must be handy.

“Your testimony is your defense, be ready with it every day. Be ever ready with an answer to give to whoever seeks to know the reason for the hope you have in Jesus Christ and his gospel. (1 Peter 3:15).

You will never live for Christ unless you die to the law.

On his way to Damascus, Paul died to the law. He died to the flesh. Before now, the flesh had been his driver. Whenever the flesh owns you, it drives you. You do none but its bidding alone. You run its errands- as did Paul and like he was on his way to Damascus when the Lord met him- when Christ caught up with him. You dance to its drum bits. You must gratify it. You must please it. When Paul was met on his way to Damascus however, he had an instant switch over in master from flesh-Satan and the authorities of the day- the high priest and the council- to the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The control over his life changed from the law which condemns, to the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ who justifies. Paul, through the help of his new master, overcome the law, but his captors and detractors were still under the law. What about you? Under what power are you? What drives you? What commands you? Are you under the flesh or the Holy Spirit? Dead to the flesh or alive to it? For as long as you are no9t dead to the flesh, then you can't have a ready defense (testimony). But if you are alive to the Holy Spirit then you have a ready defense (testimony), you have a ready testimony that is the most powerful. A testimony that has a conversion power. A testimony that you are not ashamed of. A testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ which has the power to save. A testimony that grips and cuts to the hearts of your listeners, leaving them restless for a decision. A testimony that will stand for you on the day of the Lord. A testimony that will anchor you to Jesus and usher you into eternal life as heir of God and co-heir with Jesus Christ. If we indeed share in his suffering in order that we may share in his glory (Rom 8:17)

When the world encounters you today as it did apostle Paul, will it see and find in your life the deeds of faith and the acts of love- a testimony (defense) meet of Christ Jesus and the gospel?

Would you stand for truth, overcome the power of falsehood and unbelief? Or when persecution gets intensified and increases in severity, will you compromise the gospel of salvation?

While we stand for the gospel, we must be ready to dare the hostile world. For we are in the world, yet not of the world. We will therefore either run into them or they either aim to attack us or equally run into us. Either ways, we must always be ready with our defense (testimony) of the gospel of Christ- the faith for which we contend.

Be assured dear people of God, the world's system will never be in contention with the Lord's- the kingdom system. Therefore always have in your kitty-

- Your testimony which is your defense
- The whole armour of God for hostility will always mount us.
- A dead figure to the law but alive to the Holy Spirit.
- A non compromising stance for the gospel.