

Testimonials. Eric Anderson brings the message.

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 May 2010

Preacher: Eric Anderson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Wow, it's been a long time. Marv, I thought I had a problem with my timing this morning, but as I was thinking and meeting all good friends again, all of a sudden we don't have enough time. I want to thank Marv, Pastor Marv, for inviting me and the elder board as well, just for the opportunity to speak to you a little bit, update you on what we're doing, where we're at. It's really great to see all the familiar faces out here. You make me feel bad, however, I'm the only one getting gray. The nice part about it is this, just to catch you up a little bit as to where we've been. First of all, my wife, Carol, back there. She's my loving wife and very, very patient. Ever since we joined the circus, and that's what I like to call it, we joined the circus about seven years ago. We have gone about the countryside going from show to show. We do venues like home shows, specialty shows, fairs, that sort of thing, and I sell a number of different materials. In fact, we just came from Chicago. We were at the National Restaurant Association, and we were in Chicago at a show there, and it enabled us to come and visit this morning, because as soon as we get finished here, we're on our way to San Diego. Now, for any of you gadabouts out there that think this is a romantic lifestyle, and what a great way to see the country, maybe you want to check with my wife or my mother-in-law, because she's been with us the last three weeks as to how romantic it really is, because you get to see an awful lot of the back of a windshield, and that's about it. In any case, January of this year put a little bit of mortality, the first threat of mortality in me. We were in Boston. We never take our trailer up to Boston, because it's always a chance of snow. So we were staying in a hotel. We were going to the Boston home show. Normally, it takes me about an hour, an hour and a half to set up. After about twice that amount of time, I finally got the booth put together, went back. Of course, in the meantime,

I'd been drinking about two bottles of Maalox, because I had heartburn that just wouldn't quit. I went out for, got dinner for my wife and I, and came back, ate, just took a little bit of a nap. And by about two o'clock in the morning, I'm running up and down the hallways of that hotel, trying to relieve this heartburn. It just wouldn't quit. And of course, as a coal cracker, that's for my mother-in-law's benefit. As a coal cracker, one of the things I finally gave in, I said, Carol, we got to do something. So we loaded up in the truck. I drove to the local VA hospital and went in, got a wheelchair for my wife, came back in, and the guy said, well, what's the matter with her?

And I said, it's not her. I said, I think I'm having a heart attack. Well, within five minutes, I'm laying on a gurney with more wires and tubes strapped to me than I've ever seen before, only to find the doctor standing there cross-armed over top of me as I'm sucking on a nitroglycerin lozenger. He says, how's it feel now? Because you're having a major heart attack.

Three days in the ICU, okay, I'm sitting there as I'm being gurned up to get operated on. I'm wondering, what do I do with Carol? Well, lest any of you worry about the VA hospitals today, there's been some real changes taking place, because I can't overemphasize how much they have done for us. The nurse came in to me as I'm being wheeled out of the operating room, don't worry about your wife, we've got it all taken care of. Okay, what does that mean? Well, what they did is they admitted her. So the whole time I was there, she had been able to be taken care of, which relieved me.

Now, again, after three days, I'm ready to go home. Well, they found out what I was like and wouldn't let me have the car keys until my son arrived, okay, flew in from Colorado, and he arrived and was going to drive me home. And the minute they saw the transfer of keys, that's when they let me out. We came home, went down to Delaware, which is where our house is, and we were there for, about a week. And I was going to for a follow up visit in the Wilmington Hospital, we drove up, and my plans were to go to Des Moines. As soon as I got finished, I had a show in Des Moines.

[5 : 12] Well, I believe the Lord is looking out after me for some reason. And we got through with it. It was a beautiful sunny day. We got to the Pennsylvania Turnpike, approached Harrisburg, made one round around the bend, and it was like driving through a wall of snow. There was no way, I told Carol, if we kept on, we would end up in the Allegheny Mountains somewhere, only to be stuck there for at least a week. So we made a left-hand turn and went back home. A ride that would normally take you three hours, now took us five. We get home. Now, what does a guy with a recent heart attack really need? Two and a half feet of snow, right? Two and a half feet of snow falls on Delaware, and Delaware doesn't do snow. I think they have three plows in the whole state. So every time we would go out, my son, and believe me, I was just supervising the shoveling of the driveway. In any case, by the time we got finished, and a plow never did go through the street by our house, I would have to jump 12 inches up onto the road just to be able to drive. And so consequently, that gave me another two weeks of rest and recuperation. The problem is, as my doctor told me, as I was in Wilmington, everything was normal. And just go about what your normal routine is. And Carol says, they don't know what normal is for you. Well, when they told me I had a stress test within six weeks, of course, I was on the exercise bike, making sure that I will not fail that stress test.

I just had it a couple of weeks ago. Apparently, everything is all right, because no one has called me back to tell me any different. In any case, what we end up with is, is we're here, and gives me a great opportunity to visit with you. And I've got a little bit I'd like to share in as much. First of all, Memorial Day. I love this holiday. Why? It brings back great memories for me.

I remember grade school, where, here I am, I'm starting to be one of those. Remember when? All of a sudden, hitting me. But that Memorial Day, we had to memorize in Flanders Fields.

Every year, we would have our grade school would let out, and we were given flags, and we'd all have a parade and march to the local cemetery for services. It always struck my heart.

Especially, you know, now that I'm on the road, I get to meet an awful lot of people, and some really unique people. I was telling Marv earlier, as we were at one show, I ran into a survivor of the USS Indianapolis. And if anybody has seen any programs about that, that's the ship that delivered the atomic bomb. That's also the ship on the way home. The Japanese sunk, and nobody knew it. And the 300 men were left in the ocean floating for days till we realized that the ship sunk.

[8 : 36] And an unbelievable tragedy. I got to meet a man who survived it. We were in Wisconsin last year, and I have the coin in my pocket, because I carry it with me all the time. I had a man come into my booth. I talked with him. He liked what I was doing. He left, turned around, came back and handed me a coin. And I asked him when he handed me the coin, I said, how did you lose your arm? And he just made the comment. Vietnam. As I looked at the coin, he's a Medal of Honor winner. One of 98 left alive yet.

I'm going to see him again this year. Okay. And his name is Gary Wetzel, if you'd like to read his story on the internet. We made the mistake by saying, how did you win the Medal of Honor? And he's very important for him to tell us, you don't win the Medal of Honor, you receive it.

And then I got an email from him later on this summer, where he and four others were attending a baseball game outside of Chicago. So our country is getting back to its patriotic roots, I believe, and seeing all of that. It's something that I like to do. And Marv, I hope you don't mind if I ask, are there any veterans out here? If you would, I'd like you to stand up so that we can acknowledge, honor the service that you've been in. And again, to reflect on all those that haven't.

Even you Army guys. I'm only kidding, Marv. I spent six months on an Army base. Think of that, a swabby 300 miles away from the ocean. That's why I have fond memories of the Army.

I have a great memory about this church. This church is my church. This is where I came to know Christ almost 30 years ago now. We came here, again, job-related, and we just ran into a kindergarten teacher that invited us to come to church. My wife had already been a Christian.

[11 : 02] Again, being a stubborn coal cracker, I drugged my feet. I knew better. We had been here about two years. We were doing everything. We were coming Wednesdays. We were coming Saturdays. We were doing everything. But I still hadn't accepted Christ. We took a trip out to Cedar Lake, I believe it was, for a pastor's conference. We went to everything in that pastor's conference.

My wife and I, we would split up, and we'd come back, and we'd discuss it. Well, of course, it's a long ride home. And on the way home, she asked me, well, what do you think? Because she was on my case day and night to accept Christ.

So being the smart aleck I am, I ended up saying, you know, I don't think there is a God after all that. She got so mad at me. We didn't talk the whole rest of the way home.

I will never forget, she came to Pastor Wiseman and asked, I just give up. I don't know what to do anymore. And Marv's advice was, finally, give up and let the Lord do it.

Well, she did give it up somewhat, but what she would do is she did it the roundabout way. She would get my daughter to come and ask me as to whether or not I've accepted Christ.

[12:44] One evening, after that conference, I had received a book, Your Body, His Temple. A professor, and I think he was the team dentist for Ohio State at the time, wrote the book, and it touched my heart to finally give in and say, you know what, I guess I really don't know any better.

I had such spiritual giants leading me. I guess I should have come back to church and done it with one of you guys, but I did it all on my own because you already had taught me everything I need to know to accept Christ.

And I did that. I told my daughter, yes, I've accepted Christ, and yes, I'm a Christian, and I believe. And the whole countenance in our whole household changed.

folks, if you would, for me, please, in your Bible, if you'd turn to Acts, chapter 9, I would like to read another story.

Acts, chapter 9, verse 1. Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found anyone belonging to the way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

[14:28] And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.

And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing.

And leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias, he said, Behold, here I am, Lord.

[15:41] The Lord said to him, Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas, for a man of Tarsus named Saul. And behold, he is praying.

And he is seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man how much harm he did thy saints at Jerusalem.

And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon thy name. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying hands on him said, Brother Saul, Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized, and he took food and was strengthened, and he stayed for several days in Damascus to preach.

[17:13] Now what is amazing to me is we need to take one other look at one more scripture, and if you would for me, go to 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 16.

And yet, for this reason, I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience as an example for those who would believe him for eternal life.

What I deem most here out of that is this. Your testimony. Paul's testimony, Paul's conversion, was used many, many times throughout the scripture.

Why did Paul do that? Just like you and I, our testimony is important. I believe God, in every case, saves people not only for that individual, but for the good of others.

The thing I like to bring out is this. When is the last time you've told somebody your testimony? It's something that I think that we can work on and bring more people to Christ.

[18 : 50] We have a tendency in our church society to stay with church people, but there's many people out there that we come in contact with that are just like you and I.

Will my testimony ever be as dramatic as Paul's? Doubtful. You know, it just won't happen. I didn't see a bright light. I didn't have the three days and three nights without food and water.

The nice part about it is it was an example. This morning I was listening to Les Feldick and talk about a small world. we had Les Feldick at one of our Bible studies out in Iowa and his brother was at my Bible study, Harley Feldick, which they're all, they're brothers and he's in Oklahoma, Harley's in Iowa, and both of them, great witnesses for Christ.

But it was the, it's the type of thing, the testimony that you can give to others just by reliving it. I will never forget being up at Word of Life.

We went there for one weekend, I forget what summer it was, we were meeting up with some friends that we just met, and the first thing out of that couple's mouth was, as we had three or four couples around the table, they said, why don't we have a testimony night and give us your testimony.

[20 : 23] Wow, talk about being ready in season and out. on the spot, all of a sudden it's like, wait a minute, I've never done that before. It's not that big of a deal.

But it is to edify and encourage others. Your testimony will do that. I think of a job as a parent.

It's, my kids are the most important job that I need to do. I need to tell them my testimony to ensure and find out what is their testimony.

We need to do that. Friends and neighbors, you notice when you first became a Christian, what did you do? It's just like Jesus with the apostle.

When they found out about Jesus, what the first thing they did, they ran out and told their brother.

We did the same. And as years go by, we have a tendency to get too comfortable.

[21 : 27] We need to continue because there's some soul out there waiting to hear your testimony to know. Now, we've got a great example with Paul.

Paul was a blasphemer. Paul, I mean, it didn't get any worse than what Paul is. Blasphemy, they say, is against God. He spoke against God himself, Jesus.

That's why, if you'll notice on that vision, what did Jesus say? Why are you persecuting not the church, why are you persecuting me? So, what we need to do is we need to use Paul's conversion. It is a pattern. Again, Paul's conversion. If we want to look at this in overall history, we will end up seeing that when Christ is on his second return, Israel will have the same conversion.

They will see Christ. They will have that same pattern. Paul's conversion is a pattern. It's the same thing that happened with us.

[22 : 42] When we came to know Christ, it's instantaneous. It may take a process, process, until you decide, until you make the decision.

But once God puts his divine input into it, it's an instant of divine power. That's all it is. And yet, it's the power of the world.

And it takes place in just that fraction of a second. again, if we look at the four, I like the old King James version, where what Paul says is he's the foremost.

He was the foremost, or the chief sinner. So when it comes down to people that say, well, I'm not good enough, Christ could never forgive me.

What you have is, yes, he can, because we have a pattern with Paul's life, with what Paul witnessed and what he went through. And you'll notice that Paul uses his conversion throughout the scripture, with Agrippa, with Felix.

[24 : 00] He uses his testimony to have them follow it. So that what we end up with is, is we see that he used that as input and to get him to continue on.

I liken it as the five hour energy. Can you imagine, look at what Paul put up with, the scourgings, the stonings, the shipwrecks.

And he still kept going. What could cause a person to do it? It's because he refreshed his own mind about what had happened to him.

The amount of grace that God has in store. No man can ever use it all up. And Paul kept looking at that, saying, I've got to do it.

I've got to witness to somebody. Because there's somebody, Christ saved me, there's somebody out there I have to save as well. That's the same approach we need to be taking.

[25 : 09] There's somebody out there. I keep wondering why God is saving me. What is the reason? And I always like to put it, there's somebody out there.

I may be responsible for the last person to come to know Christ before his return. What an awesome responsibility. you could be that person.

There are plenty of people out there. I watch, we don't get the opportunity to go to church a lot, simply because that's when I have to work.

And it's amazing how many people are, I keep telling Carol, we need to hold Sunday services at the home shows. We would have a full house.

It's just like going to the gambling casinos on Sunday morning. That's probably one of the best places, the old church services, because it's a full house. There are plenty out there, and people are crying for answers.

[26 : 18] And I think we've got an opportunity now for a general revival, a new awakening to the American people. We've put it aside for many years.

Ah, Christianity, I know everything about it. in Chicago, I had the opportunity of the man that I worked with. I knew he had no idea.

He came up to me and he says, well, what are you doing after this weekend? And I said, well, I'm coming to Grace Bible Church and I'm going to preach Sunday morning. All of a sudden, his whole countenance changed.

He said, I knew I had you pegged. I said, what do you mean by that comment? In the fact that he says, ah, and he never did answer me. But he knew there was something different, something wrong, or something that he wasn't close to.

And I just left it at that. We got up the next morning to go set our booth up. We had a, you know, and of course, Chicago traffic, you have an hour no matter where you want to go.

[27 : 25] So we had an hour of captivity. That's what I like it to do because he couldn't go anywhere. And that was the very next thing. He came to me and he says, he started hitting me up with some pretty intense questions.

And we spent an hour. And I got the opportunity to share with him a little bit of my testimony and a little bit of what I knew about answering some of the questions he had.

He had been brought up and steeped in Catholicism. And of course he had all the major trappings of that particular doctrine.

And I love, see, the nice part is I've never left this church. We only had a glitch when we moved from tapes to CDs because we had to figure out all the stuff in the car.

But we continue. I'm hearing the lessons on doctrine all over again. And guys, you've got to appreciate this man. It's phenomenal.

[28 : 34] I'm hearing it all over again, Marvin. It's phenomenal the way you're doing it this time and the clarity that's there to know what you believe because there's so many people out there that don't.

They just follow the crowd whatever way that wind is blowing. were steeped in that doctrine and I tell Carol time and time again, I was ruined.

When I came to this church, I was ruined. Because every other church I go to, I want to argue. And it gets to the point where that's what you do.

You go in and after every service, I'm going up, do you really mean what you say? And they look at me like deer in the headlights.

What are you talking about? Because they don't expect people to listen to them. They're just there following the motions, not understanding what they believe and why.

[29 : 36] And that's the important part about the doctrine. Paul's testimony was a pattern for us. Ours happened exactly the same time.

So that what we end up with is as we go through it. Just take a look as an example of the first chapter of Romans.

I reviewed that here this past week. How in the world could a God ever save any of those monsters? Because we be them.

And yet there's enough grace around for all of us. It's just a matter of making the decision to follow it. Talk about long suffering.

Paul and Timothy. And if we would, let's go to 1 Timothy again, if you would. He describes that long suffering.

[30 : 48] And yet for this reason I found mercy in order that me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate perfect patience.

The King James version says all long suffering. God was willing to wait for the right time. Paul had nothing to do with his conversion.

Just as we have really nothing to do with it, it's all part of God's plan. It was an impulse that kept him moving.

It was that five hour energy drink, but it just kept coming and coming to enable him to go through all the trials and all the tribulations that he did.

Paul's foremost position as a sinner didn't prevent him from being foremost in grace. So no matter what we have done, no matter what that person you're talking with has done, it really doesn't matter.

[32 : 03] they could still be foremost in grace as well. What you've done doesn't stop it. No matter where you've been, Paul has beat you to the punch.

And he proves that we still have eternal life because of a gracious God. that long suffering, patience that God has, he not only did it with Paul, but he's willing to do it with you.

He's waiting to make that decision. Paul's pattern in the mode in which he also is converted is our pattern.

there's nothing at all for Paul to contribute. He didn't contribute anything to his salvation. His salvation was instant and divine. And there was an immediate change.

There always is an immediate change if you come to Christ. He was saved by faith and not by works.

[33 : 16] He continues to say that. Believe what God has said. Trust him that he sent his son, that he died on a cross, that he was buried, that he rose again.

Just believe the truth and you'll be saved. There's no work involved. And when it comes to work, it's not work afterwards.

It's showing your gratitude to Christ for what he's done for you. That is the key. On this Memorial Day weekend, not only do we want to remember all the sacrifices that were made by others for our country, but I'd like you to remember also your testimony, your conversion, and put it to good use again, so that we can bring others to Christ.

For remember, you may be that one person that Christ is waiting for, to visit with the other, for the last one to be joined to our kingdom of God.

God, I'm going to close a little early, my timing is off, if we can bow our heads in prayer, please.

[34 : 54] Heavenly Father, thank you for this opportunity to visit with friends, to come back to where it all began, at least for my part.

thank you for this joyous opportunity to be with friends, it's like we never go apart, we're in constant contact.

Have our conversions, have our testimonies go out to others, so that they can also come to know you.

We give great gratitude to Christ for what he has done, all the grace that he has given us. Nothing else can outperform it.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.