

Text: Acts 23.11

This morning we talked about the response to the gospel witness, how so many react indifferently or negatively, yet God continues to build his church over time and all over the world.

For our communion service this month, I want to go back in Acts 23 to a verse we covered some weeks ago and key in on a prominent word in the verse.

Ac 23.11 ¶ But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have

solemnly witnessed

to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must *witness* at Rome also.”

The word I’m interested in is “solemnly witnessed.” We’ve mentioned this word before, giving it a sense of its meaning. Today I want to draw out this meaning in a little more thorough way and think about it in terms of the import of gospel, to give it its full due and weight in our minds.

This is one of those messages that works its way through a layer of facts, with the idea of building towards a conclusion.

Before we start, you will note in our verse that I’ve highlighted “witness” two different ways in our text. That is because we have two different but related words in our text.

The second word is a little less formal, but has the same root as the first word.

diamarturomai – to call forth a solemn witness

martureo – to witness, testify

They both describe the act of giving a witness to something. If you see an accident on a street corner, you can tell everyone what you saw. You *will* tell everyone what you saw.

However, if you are in court, you will solemnly swear, then you will seriously and soberly recount the testimony as carefully as possible.

That is something of the difference between the two words, but we are going to look at the first one in a little more detail.

I. The Solemn Testimony in the OT

A. To make known

Ezek 16.2 “Son of man, **make known** to Jerusalem her abominations

Ezek 20.4 “Will you judge them, will you judge them, son of man? **Make them know** the abominations of their fathers;

B. To warn, to call to witness, to solemnly witness

Ex 19.21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Go down, **warn** the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

Dt 4.26 **I call heaven and earth to witness** against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

Dt 8.19 “It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, **I testify against you** today that you will surely perish.

II. The Solemn Testimony in the Epistles

A. The usage in these verses is as a solemn warning

1Th 4:6 *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and **solemnly warned you**.

1Ti 5:21 **I solemnly charge** you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of* partiality.

2Ti 2:14 ¶ Remind *them* of these things, and **solemnly charge them** in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless *and leads* to the ruin of the hearers.

2Ti 4:1 ¶ **I solemnly charge you** in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

B. There is a generic use as “testimony” in Hebrews

Heb 2:6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that you remember him? Or the son of man, that you are concerned about him?"

III. The Solemn Testimony in Acts

A. Day of Pentecost:

Act 2:40 And with many other words he **solemnly testified** and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

B. Philip and Peter and John in Samaria

Act 8:25 ¶ So, when they had **solemnly testified** and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

C. Peter to Cornelius

Act 10:42 “And He ordered us to preach to the people, and **solemnly to testify** that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

D. Paul and Silas and Timothy in Corinth

Act 18:5 ¶ But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, **solemnly testifying** to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

E. In Paul’s farewell sermon to the Ephesian elders

Act 20:21 **solemnly testifying** to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Act 20:23 except that the Holy Spirit **solemnly testifies** to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

Act 20:24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to **testify solemnly** of the gospel of the grace of God.

F. The Lord Jesus to Paul in our text

Act 23:11 ¶ But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have **solemnly witnessed** to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”

1. The Solemn Testimony underscores the importance, the seriousness, of the subject matter
2. In Acts, almost every reference is to the Gospel

IV. The content of the Solemn Testimony

A. In our text, “solemnly testified to my cause”

KJV: “as thou hast testified of me”

ESV: “as you have testified to the facts about me”

NET: “as you have testified about me”

YLT: “for as thou didst fully testify the things concerning me”

B. The YLT is exactly right: “the things concerning me”

Read Acts 22.1-18

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah
2. The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead
3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the sacrifice for the sins of the world

Read Acts 22.19-22

Conclusion:

The Jews said, “Away with him!” referring to Paul.

If they could have killed Jesus a second time, they would have.

Yet this same Jesus died for their sins, just as for our sins.

“How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.”
Mt 23.37

Do you know him? Is he Lord for you? This is our solemn testimony.