

1 Timothy 1:12-20 Bible Study Guide – Application And Questions

I. Paul's Testimony (12-17)

Cross-References

Verses on Sharing Your Testimony:

1 Chronicles 16:8 – Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

Daniel 4:2 – It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

Psalms 107:2 – Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble

Luke 8:39 – “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

2 Timothy 1:8 – Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Discussion Questions

- Do you think there are any sins too serious for God to forgive?
- What do you notice about Paul's attitude towards his previous condition?
- What about his attitude towards his present condition?
- What purpose/purposes did Christ have in choosing Paul?
- How do we see this purpose still being fulfilled almost two thousand years later?
- Finish this statement, “If Paul could be saved, then...”
- What does Paul's testimony tell us about God's grace?
- Why is it important for us to also share our testimony?
- How can we use our testimony as a witnessing tool?

Class Assignment

1. Study Paul's more lengthy testimony in Acts 22:1-21.

- What parts does Paul's testimony have? Or how could it be divided up? (We can see it has 3 clear parts: his life before salvation, how he was saved, and then his new life after salvation.)
- What elements can you see here that make for a good testimony?
- Do you think this testimony is powerful? Why or why not?
- Some people think that their testimony is boring perhaps because they grew up in a Christian family or were not as wicked as others prior to coming to Christ. What would you tell such a person?
- Do you think that your testimony is powerful? Why or why not?
- What elements make Paul's testimony interesting?
- What elements of the gospel can you see in his testimony? (Jesus, repentance, faith.)
- Who was he sharing his testimony with? Who can we share our testimony with? (Could be anyone, opponents, adversaries, friends, strangers.)

2. What are the ingredients of a good testimony?

- Short and concise (if talk too long it will feel like a lecture and may get boring)
- Clear and Structured (it should have clear points and a central theme)
- Personal (this is your testimony. Why do YOU believe in and follow God? How has YOUR life changed?)
- Interesting (A testimony is not a blind recitation of theology or dogma. It is a vibrant story of how God has changed you. If you have any good stories to share such as how God has changed you, the difference in your life now, or answers to prayer, include one or two inside.)
- End with a question (The goal is to start a conversation and interact with the person you are sharing with. Ask an open ended question to close. What do you believe in?)
- What do you think is the meaning of life? Have you ever considered if there is a God? Where do you think this world came from? Have you ever seen spiritual things you can't explain?)

3. Prepare your own testimony. You can write out the whole testimony or an outline. For the sake of our workshop today we will practice a testimony that is between 2-3 minutes.

4. In groups of 3 share your 2-3 minute testimony. To keep on time please have one person in the group keep a timer. After each person's sharing the other two people in the group can give feedback. Here are a few questions you can use for giving feedback: What aspects of the testimony were good? Do you have any suggestions for areas of improvement? Was it clear? Was it personal? Was it interesting? Would the final question be likely to stimulate a good conversation or response?

Verse by Verse Commentary

1. One important purpose of sharing our testimony is it reminds us to be continually grateful – As Paul shared his testimony with others, it reminded him to first thank Jesus again for His grace in his life. We often consider that sharing our testimony is a witnessing tool and is beneficial to others. That is certainly true. But we often don't realize that one of the most important benefits is to ourselves. When we share our testimony, we first remember it. We remember what God has done in our lives and articulate our thoughts on it. These things will generally stir in us a heart of thanksgiving like it did for Paul.

When couples have marriage trouble, counselors will often ask them to share how they first met or their first date or how they felt on their honeymoon or similar testimonies. One reason they do this is to try to help both sides remember the good things they have experienced and in remembering to grow in or renew their love for the other side.

Application: Make a habit of telling others what God is doing in your life. It can include your salvation testimony, but is not limited to that. When you have the habit to be sharing what God is doing in your life you will be more alert to the work that He is doing in you. And you will be more grateful for it. Ask each person in the study to share a testimony of how God has worked in their life within the past month.

2. He considered me faithful – This is an interesting phrase. Paul then goes on to talk about how he was a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church. How could God consider him to be faithful? Clearly Paul wasn't faithful at the time. But God saw what Paul could be, what Paul would be. Certainly God Himself brought this to pass. At the same time, it reminds us that God looks at us not for what we are, but for what we can be in Him.

A sculpture looks at a hunk of ugly rock and exclaims, "It's perfect!" He doesn't look at the rock in its current state. He doesn't focus on the cracks, the flaws, the dirt. Instead he is thinking about what this rock can become with a bit of work.

I believe that God looks at us in the same way. One example of this is Peter, whose previous name was Simon. Jesus called him, "rock" long before he ever acted like a rock. Jesus saw what he could be.

God has created each of us and endowed us with certain qualities and spiritual gifts. Sometimes these qualities and gifts are lurking under the surface unused or even abused. But He doesn't throw us out like rubbish. Instead he nurtures us and equips us for the great work He wants us to do on behalf of His kingdom.

Isaiah 42:3 – A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.

Application: Next time you are discouraged or depressed remember these thoughts. Remember that God has chosen you for an awesome work. He puts great value on you. Your self-esteem should not be derived from your own innate goodness. It comes instead from knowing that whatever you have done God still looks at you and sees what you can be with a bit of work.

3. If Paul can change, then anybody can – In verse 16 Paul actually says that it is “for this reason” that he was saved so that through Him Jesus could demonstrate His patience as an example. So God is looking down from heaven. And He wants to show the world the level of His love, grace, and mercy. He wants to show everyone that anyone can come to Him and be forgiven. He wants to show everyone that anyone can change by His grace. He also wants to give hope to those who think that either they themselves or people around them are lost beyond hope. So what does He do?

He chooses Paul. Paul is a person who has relentlessly persecuted the church. He is one of its very biggest enemies. Yes, Paul will make a very nice object lesson indeed! So God takes this enemy and changes him one hundred eighty degrees. He doesn't merely save him. But he makes him into the most famous missionary, apostle, church planter, Scripture writer, and preacher of all. And then He says, “See. That is how merciful I am.”

Application: No matter what you have done in the past, there is hope. God's grace is available. He is mighty to save. You may think that a friend or a relative is beyond hope. Perhaps they have done terrible sins. Perhaps they are the most aggressive God hater out there. They are not beyond hope. Richard Dawkins is perhaps the world's most antagonist person toward God and the Bible. He has said some truly terrible things about God, which I will not print here. And God is big and powerful enough to change even him.

4. What can we learn about leadership or leaders from these verses?-

It is Christ who strengthens someone and gives them their abilities. We can see Paul's humility. He recognized his own sinfulness and he recognized God's goodness. We see many words showing Paul's gratitude to the Lord and recognition that it was His doing and not his own: strengthened me (12), considered me (12), putting me (12), mercy (13), grace (14), to save sinners (15), of which I am first of all (15), mercy (16), patience (16), honor and glory forever (17). Paul gives all the glory, all the credit to God.

He knows that he was a terrible sinner and he is only now an apostle and servant of the Lord because of his grace and mercy. Jesus made him who he was. How would this knowledge effect Paul as a leader? How does this same knowledge effect us? It should humble us. It should make us rely on God and not ourselves. It should cause us to show compassion for those we serve, even stubborn hard-hearted unbelievers (because we are like them except for God's grace.) What are some practical ways we can keep ourselves humble?

II. Fight the Good Fight (18-20)

Cross-References

1 Corinthians 5:5 – You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

1 John 5:19 – We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Matthew 18:15-17 – If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

1 Corinthians 5:11 – But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

Verse by Verse Commentary

1. In accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you – We are not sure what these are. But apparently they were made concerning his service to God in the future.

2. Fight the good fight – We are in a fight, a war. A war against Satan and his evil forces. A war against sin. A war against the evil and false teachings in this world. Following God is not easy. There are always challenges. It is easy to give up. It is easy to say “let someone else do it.” God wants us to fight. He wants us to persevere. He wants us to keep going. It takes hard work and commitment. It takes a lot of energy and time.

3. We see in verses 19-20 that not everyone finishes this fight. Some people are shipwrecked in their faith. Some people give up or fall away. I believe Paul specifically mentions these two people as a warning that it is possible for a person who seems to be a faithful believer to fall away. These warnings should wake us up. It should remind us to evaluate ourselves and always to remain humble and dependant on the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:12 – Therefore the one thinking to stand, let him take heed, lest he fall.

Philippians 2:12 – So that, my beloved, as ye always obey, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, with fear and trembling your own salvation work out.

Questions: Why does this happen? What can you do now to make sure that is not your name in verse 20 along with Hymenaeus and Alexander? What does it mean to turn someone over to Satan?

4. Whom I handed over to Satan – Read over cross-references above. The world is Satan’s domain according to 1 John 5:19. Turning a person over to Satan is a term used by Paul to denote excommunication. In other words, a person is put out of the church and into the world. They are treated as if they are an unbeliever. Note that this does not mean you should hate such a person. We are not to hate unbelievers.

It does mean that this person is not treated as if they are a brother and sister in Christ. This is not punitive punishment. Rather it is done as a warning to such a person that they need to repent and come back to God. If such discipline is not carried out many people will carry on living sinful lives in defiance of God’s Word, but doing so in the church thinking everything is OK.

Dwight Moody once said, “You have to preach a person into hell, before you can preach them into heaven.” In other words, a person must know he has a problem before He can come to God for the solution. If a person who is living in rebellion toward God is allowed to go on thinking that everything is OK, this is an evil act toward that person. It may seem compassionate at the time, but it is not.

Discussion Questions

- In verse 18, what does it mean to fight the good fight? What fight is this talking about? Are we to fight this fight? How might this look for us today?
- What is the conscience and what does it mean that we are supposed to keep a good conscience?
- Looking at verse 19, is it possible that believers can lose their salvation? What was the nature of this faith?
- What does it mean that Paul handed these two guys over to Satan?
- What are some applications we can make from this passage?