

A Wonderful Testimony

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- [0 : 01] Good morning, everyone. New microphone. Is it loud enough? I needed to overpower the elephants running up the stairs over there.
- You can turn it down a bit, guys. So as you guys all know, Carl had read to you out of 1 Timothy, so please open your Bibles up to 1 Timothy chapter 1.
- So we're kind of in our regular lives now, right? Kids are in school. You guys live in normal lives now?
- No more summertime, no more fun. Of course, we have a Win Stanley shaking their head. No, vacation is every day. Anyhow, we're kind of getting back to normal.
- So as you all know, we've been kind of doing the life of Christ, and the last time we did that, that was back in July, and we're not quite finished it. But before we dive back into it, I thought I would open up with a kind of a new season sermon on an issue that I think is of particularly importance to the Christian life, and I hope it will resonate with you.
- [1 : 13] And it's a little bit of a different type of sermon. Although you see in the brochure it says a wonderful testimony, you can scratch that. That's not what I'm going to preach on.
- What I'm going to preach on is how to give your testimony. How to give your testimony. We as believers in Christ have been called to share the hope that is within us.
- And one of the most efficient, best ways to go about showing the love of Jesus Christ is to be able to share our testimony.
- Now for some of you who may not have grown up in the church, you might not be familiar with that term in church speak. A testimony is essentially what is the story of you and Jesus.
- Often we hear stories when we baptize someone, someone tells us the story of how they got there. But there's generally three components to a testimony. The first part of the testimony is who I was before Jesus came into my life.
- [2 : 14] How I was living my life. What life looked like. The middle component is how Jesus inserted himself into my life and how I came to that point of accepting him as my own Lord and personal Savior.
- And the third component to a testimony is what my life looks like now because I have Jesus. Now sometimes we often place a priority on the middle part.
- How I came to know Jesus. My favorite part is the last part. It is how has your life changed because of Jesus.
- What difference does Jesus make in your workplace? What difference does Jesus make in your family life?
- What difference does Jesus make with your hobbies? How you spend your time? What is the focus and energy of your life? How has Jesus changed your values?
- [3 : 21] For some people it's instantaneous. But for others sometimes it takes years even decades to flush out the change that Jesus Christ brings to a person's life.

No matter the time it's still a part of your testimony. The ongoing change that Jesus does in one's life. My belief is that at any time if you're a member here at Squamish Baptist Church if I ask you to come up and share your testimony.

Not only are you able but you're willing to. Just to say it's Sunday. It's September. Whose name starts with the letter S and I just name you.

And you're like hot diggity dog. Let me share you the story about what Jesus did for me. Right? It was interesting. I used to be in a ministry called Athletes in Action. And we had to be prepared no matter what.

No matter when. And we would actually work on our testimony. And share what Jesus did. And it was a great exercise to be ready and willing and able to share that at any time.

[4 : 36] So here are a few reasons to share your testimony that I'd like to share with you. One, it's an opportunity to share your testimony about how Jesus changed you.

It's an opportunity to share with someone how Jesus actually changed you. It's actually another point is it's actually a very unique way to connect with someone.

We all have different stories. And there's just a way of when you share your testimony you're opening up for Christians, believers in Christ, the most intimate part of our lives.

And opening that up to someone. To share with them who we are, why we are the way we are. Third reason that I would encourage people to share your testimony is because it encourages people.

It encourages people. For some people who've lived a longer life, they've got more examples of how God has worked in their lives. And just to be able to share with a younger brother or sister in the Lord about where there are, whether perhaps they're struggling with faith, some issue in their faith.

[5 : 46] And you can share, hey, listen, there was a time when I was really struggling and grinding out. And I was just really finding it hard to believe. But then I came across the scripture and it really meant a lot to me.

And I really started to really trust Jesus. And these are the things that happened to me along the way. Another reason why you want to share your testimony, because it helps you remember what God has done for you.

It helps you remember what God has done for you. Listen, for some of us like myself, we're 35, right? We remember everything. But when you get to 55, you know, you start to forget certain things about your life.

But it's really encouraging as you start to share with people what's going on. And you start to remember, yeah, I remember that time coming in out of, I don't know, out of high school. And I remember, you know, you just remember different parts of your life.

And you get to see how kind God was in your life. And probably the most and best reason why you should know your testimony and why you need to share it, because it's a wonderful way to share the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 01] Amen? We live in a world, and I'm going to point it out to you today, that is really messed up in their understanding of Jesus. And instead of inviting them to a theology class, you can actually teach someone the truth of Jesus just in how he worked in your life.

And it's an excellent opportunity for you to share how he lived, how he died, how he rose again, and how that mattered to you. For some, it's that, I didn't know Jesus could forgive someone like me.

Right? You can even point to the thief on the cross who was instantaneous. He didn't need to think about the gospel. As soon as he heard Jesus speak that, he was saved.

And another reason is, and it's on the connection part, and I'm going to say that sometimes testimonies do affect different people in different ways.

And I had this quick little story, and I didn't know where to fit it into my sermon, so I'm going to fit it in now. Right? So when I was in University Athletes in Action, and I kind of mentioned it before, you guys remember Paul Henderson, Dave Regeer, Murray, thank you.

[8 : 20] All right? So back in 1972, and they're actually making a documentary on it for the 18th time, but there was a big hockey series, Canada versus Russia, and they came over, and it was interesting, in the hockey series, this Toronto Maple Leaf guy scored the overtime winning goal in the last three games.

Okay? Just think about that. That was just crazy that would happen, and it was the same guy that scored the goal. And he had been kind of like a mediocre hockey player.

Like, I can't say mediocre, because he made Team Canada, but he wasn't like Wayne Gretzky. You guys still remember who Wayne Gretzky is? Thank you. Okay. So his name was Paul Henderson, and he was the guy.

So all of a sudden, he's like national hero. Okay? He still doesn't have to buy a drink in any place where he goes. Like, people love this guy.

He's the guy who defeated the ugly, horrible Russians. Okay? But he did not know Jesus when that happened, and he struggled, just struggling with the fame and everything that came with it, and just all the sins that happened with that.

[9 : 31] And through that, he started to open up to Jesus in his brokenness and became a Christian. So when I told my guys in residence that Paul Henderson was coming over to have pizza with them, I had to lock the door because of fire code violations.

No exaggeration. Everybody in my residence wanted to come and hear Paul Henderson. Now, as we were going, we were sharing testimonies, and my friend Dan, who was the leader in, he was my Bible study leader, someone asked him his story.

And following Paul Henderson in testimonies, right? It's like me following him. I can't even skate, right?

So anyhow, my friend Dan turned out he used to be a real estate lawyer. But he shared through that. While he was a real estate lawyer, someone shared the gospel.

He left that to become a full-time worker with Campus Crusade for Christ. And what was really interesting is that more guys, how do I say this, more guys were deeply more influenced by Dan's testimony than they were by Paul's because we can't relate to Paul's, but we can relate to Dan.

[10 : 49] He was an everyday guy doing an everyday job. Jesus came in and changed him into something different, and he was now pursuing something different in life. Why do I share that story?

Because we're all different, and we all have a story. And it doesn't matter who we are. God's got something to say with your life to somebody. So this morning, what I want to do, I want to share with you the effect that Paul's testimony has and what Paul's testimony has to share with us in the instruction that Paul gives to us from 1 Timothy 9.

So in case you don't know, Paul's testimony, we first hear about in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 9. We believe that Paul was a very high-ranking individual in the Jewish religious, oh, I don't know, monolith of whatever they were.

And he was given instructions that he could go city to city and round up Christians. And he could take these Christians, and he'd have this letter from the high priests, which were from the Sanhedrin, that he could go and arrest people in different cities.

So he was kind of like a marshal going to catch those bad outlaw Christians, right? So on the way to Damascus one day, he's on his way, he's got his letter, and Jesus Christ appears to him as a bright shining light.

[12 : 19] It blinds him, and Jesus Christ speaks to him and says, Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me? And Paul's amazed at this point, does not know what's going on, he doesn't know what's happening, then Jesus speaks to him, and then because he's blinded, he pretty much has to listen to God, right?

And then God tells him, he says, listen, I want you to go to this place, and there's this man who's going to come, and he's going to lay hands on you.

And it's interesting in the story of Acts 9, Ananias, the man who's encouraged to go meet with him, doesn't even want to go meet with Paul, because that's how bad of a guy Paul was, right?

The church had known this guy was an enemy from the start. So we have this story, this is part of his testimony, that Luke shares. But if you know your Bibles, at different points, Paul shares different aspects of his testimony.

And that is what the passage that Carl read for us this morning, that he read for us, and I'm going to read it to you again, about part of his testimony.

[13 : 30] And it starts in 1 Timothy 1, and we're going to read quickly in verse 12. He says, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

That's all I'm going to read right now. So we're going to look this morning at Paul's testimony, and we're going to see what we can learn from that, which we can hopefully apply to our own lives.

Is that good? You guys agree? You need some brush up on testimonies and stuff? Can I get a few more nods? Yeah, okay. Yeah, good. Hands up, whistling. All right, let me pray for you first, before we go any further.

Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we just thank you for your word. And we thank you even for these passages of our brothers and sisters of the faith who came before us, who share with us their testimonies, who they were before.

They are not ashamed to tell us about what they were. Paul says, I was a blasphemer, a murderer. But yet God, in his great mercy, saved him.

[15 : 02] Father, I pray that we would be like Paul. Father, the truth of the matter is, Christians, we desire to see our brothers and sisters come to faith. We desire to see our moms and dads.

We desire to see our friends, our coworkers, the people that we meet, and we have this opportunity to make connections. And so often, as believers do, we stutter. We do not know what to say.

We do not know how to connect. But there is just something powerful in testimony. Sometimes a testimony is 20 minutes. Sometimes it's like 15 seconds.

It's just relaying an eternal truth to someone about what Jesus means to us. And sometimes it has eternal consequences in the listener.

I pray for the saints that are gathered here at Squamish Baptist Church that we would heed Paul's words and that it would be something offered to them in this sermon that they would be encouraged by, that they'd be strengthened by, that they would be instructed by in order to share the good news of Jesus with others.

[16 : 13] We ask these things in your name. Amen. So the first thing that I want you to see is I want you to see how Paul uses his testimony.

How Paul uses his testimony. Now, to get to this point, you need to know and understand a bit of background to this letter. So 1 Timothy is a letter written to a man named Timothy.

And at the time of this letter, Timothy had been charged by Paul to go to the church of Ephesus, which we have the book of Ephesians. And Ephesus is an interesting church.

We believe in church history. There was a couple by Priscilla and Aquila were the first couple that were there. And they planted it.

They shared the news of Jesus Christ in the synagogues. And more and more people became Christian. And Paul, on his missionary journey, arrived there. Then he stayed there for three years.

[17 : 12] And he taught. And he's constantly writing these people. And his heart are on these people who are at this church in Ephesus. But while he was away, bad teaching started to arise.

False teachers, people looking to get noticed, started coming in and teaching other doctrines. So Paul says, Timothy, I need you to go into that church and clean it up.

All right, you with me? So that's the whole purpose. So he's sending Timothy in there to do this. So take a look at 1 Timothy 1, 3, verses 3. And it says, Paul says, As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.

Doctrine is another word for teachings. Nor devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Listen, ever since the early church form, there is just rampant, stupid, silly speculations that people like to think about that have no bearing on the Christian life.

[18 : 31] An extreme position would be how many angels could fit on a head of a pin of a needle, right? Theologians could think about that forever and trying to figure it.

It's useless. It means nothing. So Paul's trying to encourage Timothy to get into that church and get them away from these myths and these speculations rather than what they should be doing.

So it is a big job that Timothy has been given. Now let me tell you the difference between Timothy and Paul.

Paul, before he became a Christian, knew the Old Testament. He knew the Torah. He knew all the scriptures. He was considered a very religious man and he was a strong man.

This was a determined man, right? This guy's a bully for lack of a better word. Bullies aren't small little people. Bullies usually have a physical presence like Dave Regeer.

[19 : 38] Not saying Dave's a bully, but right, you know, he comes up. You're automatically kind of, so now his son Nathan, I heard, is the bully of the family, but that's something else. Anyway, he's usually a big, bold guy.

So Paul going in to clean something up doesn't really matter. You know what we know about Timothy? Timothy was raised by his mother and his grandmother.

Right? That's the difference between the two guys, really, right? One guy, self-accomplished, and this other guy who's lived in this really loving Christian home, raised by his mother and his grandmother, and he's got to go in there and be the heavy.

So Paul needs to encourage him. And that's what Paul does. He knows he's got a tough challenge. Now, notice that in verse 18, it says, this charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child.

It's a term of endearment. In accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith in a good conscience.

[20 : 53] Think of that word, entrust you. There's something intimate about that, right? You don't see a neighbor passing by and say, hey, can I entrust the care of my kids to you?

Right? Heck, for some of us who've got dogs, and you're walking your dog, and you've got to go take some. You know, it's like, hey, can I entrust you to take care of my dog for the afternoon because I've got to go to work?

No, right? We would call someone that we trust because it's something precious, something important. So this job that Timothy has is an important job.

But what Paul is reminding him is, look what God did through me. What I need you to do, Timothy, is I need you to trust how God is going to work in you.

Notice it says, in accordance with the prophecies made about you, that be them, you may wage the good warfare.

[22 : 00] What it means is the prophecies. He has been tested. He's a good, godly man. He's demonstrated character, maturity, understanding of God's word.

So he's not given this role of cleaning up the church of Ephesus because he's a big guy. He's given it for another reason.

He's a trustworthy, honorable, kind man. And the religious leaders at that time think enough of Timothy to do that.

So Paul's saying, trust them. At the same time, you know that work that God did through me? Trust that God's going to do that in you.

So the first reason why we share our testimonies is to encourage others, right? A person doesn't always have to be an unbeliever and can be a weak believer, someone who's just starting out, someone who's scared and is wondering, how is God ever going to carry me through this time?

[23 : 08] What else can our testimonies do? Well, Paul's testimony teaches what exactly is the gospel and an opportunity to share the gospel.

So remember, these teachers are teaching a false gospel. The fact of the matter is there's no shortage of wrong teachings about Jesus. So this is a great opportunity to share with people who Jesus is.

So let's take a look at verse 15. This saying, the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

That is a huge, thick statement. In fact, when Paul says this saying is trustworthy, it is a universally applied statement that is pretty much known throughout all their churches.

It's a truism. Like water is wet, right? So it's just known. People know that. They accept it. This is the truth. So anyone who knows about Jesus knows that Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

[24 : 23] If anybody ever tells you that Jesus came into the world to do anything else, eh, eh, right? Wrong. We know this to be true. Why?

Because there's firsthand witnesses that exist in this day that tell us these truths. But by making these truths, Paul makes four different statements here.

All right? The four statements, the four things that happen when we share the gospel with someone else, we're sharing the first thing is the content of the gospel is true and trustworthy.

Amen? It's true and trustworthy. It's been historically proven. You can't deny it. In contrast to the speculation nonsense that these false teachers are saying, and they're still saying it today.

Amen? Amen? They are. The gospel is as true today as it was yesterday, and it will be tomorrow. Let me tell you something about the gospel.

[25 : 24] It doesn't matter what country you live in. It doesn't matter what language you speak. It doesn't matter what time of year you share it.

It is true all the time, every time, all time, right? And that's it, and we need to hold to that. There's no other condition in this world that changes our understanding of the gospel.

Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus died a perfect death. And Jesus rose again, conquering sin so that we may be saved. Amen? Amen?

That's the gospel. Can you do that? Can you share those truths with your testimony? You see, nothing changes the conditions of the gospel.

So that's the first thing what happens. When we share the gospel, we need to understand it's always true and trustworthy. The second element of our gospel presentation in our testimony is we need to make sure that the offer of the gospel is universal.

[26 : 28] It is universal. It doesn't matter how smart you are, how educated you are. It doesn't matter if you're a Greek or a Jew. It doesn't mean if you're rich or poor, slave or free, educated, not education.

It doesn't even matter if you're a girl or a boy. Right? And when Paul wrote this, I just quoted to you out of Galatians 3, people thought salvation was only for certain people.

Remember, that's the life of Christ, right? They believed Jews only believed it was meant for Jews or someone that converted to Judaism could be saved. Jesus Christ has to tell them over and over and over.

No. The gospel's for everyone. The gospel is universal. And you know what? The gospel applies to everyone in the exact same way.

Amen? So it doesn't matter who you're talking to, what country they're from, like I said, what language they're from, how old they are, it's still the same gospel.

[27 : 33] The third truth that you need to convey in your testimony is the heart of the gospels that Jesus came to save sinners. Amen? He came to save sinners.

Jesus did not come to this world to teach us how to live really good lives. He didn't come to this world to teach us to be really Jewish. Right? He didn't teach us that the law was salvation.

No, he came to teach us that the law equated death, but only salvation could be had through him. Did Jesus come to save just the religious, the wise, the rich, the good?

You know, the fact of the matter is, Jesus came for the poor in spirit, the destitute, those trapped in the prisons of their sin.

I was just reading this book on early church history this week, and you want to know something? When the church first started off, a lot of them were Jews, right? Because that's who the apostles knew.

[28 : 37] They'd go into the synagogues and share the good news with Jews. But then they started complaining, so these synagogues, they'd move over, they'd get another building and kind of do a church. You know who started showing up?

Gentiles, but not just any Gentiles. Lone sharkers, pimps, prostitutes, panhandlers. All these people who were from the dregs of society were hearing for the first time that Jesus loved them and wanted to save them, and they got saved and came to the church.

And the church was so messed up, we thought salvation was only for us good Jews. No, it's for the rotten Gentiles too, right? It's crazy.

It happens even today, right? That is the power of the gospel. It saves anybody and everyone. And here's the fourth thing I want you to think about when you share your gospel, your testimony.

Make sure it's personal, right? Jesus Christ didn't come to save horrible sinners. He came to save me, the horrible sinner.

[29 : 47] That it's not enough that Jesus did all these things and mankind asked, I need to have that relationship with Jesus Christ. You see, this offer that Jesus Christ makes to us is personal.

Although the offer is for everyone, it still requires personal acceptance. You may believe that Jesus Christ lived a perfect life.

You may believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross. You may believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. But until you believe he did all those things to save you from your sins, then it's not yours.

But until you understand that he did this for you, you do not understand the gospel. My friends, it's imperative in your testimony to share this part.

The decision that you made to personalize the truth of the gospel. It's the acknowledgement that it was your sin that condemns you.

[30 : 57] Not all of the mankind's sin, but your own sin. And that is the sin that Jesus saves you from. Amen? So when you share your testimony, four things.

Share that the gospel is truth. That the gospel is universal. That Jesus came to save sinners. And if you share that you are somehow special and deserve God's salvation, guess what?

You don't understand the gospel. And the fourth thing you need to understand is Jesus personally came for you and he came for them to save them of their sin.

It's interesting. In Matthew 1.21 when Joseph was presented with this message from an angel after he found out his wife was pregnant, the angel told him, for he will save his people from their sins.

It's beautiful, isn't it? Right from the very start, that was what Jesus came to do. Now I want to get back to this idea of being a sinner.

[32 : 14] The reason I want to is because this is in my experience where people struggle the most with. Some people either glorify their sin when sharing a testimony or they short change their sin when sharing their testimony.

A lot of people were shamed, right? Some of us, we don't like who we were before Jesus Christ knew us. We don't want to tell our kids that, you know what? I was involved with alcohol or drugs or I slept with someone else before I met your mom.

Like no one wants to share that dirty part, right? It's our shame. It's our foolishness. But as we're going to learn, look at verse 15 again. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

This is Paul speaking, right? See, every testimony that glorifies God readily admits that we are a sinner who offended a holy God. Note what Paul says.

He's a sinner of whom I am the foremost. The word means that Paul considered himself the worst sinner, the chief of sinners, the world's number one sinner. You know that coffee cup, world's best boss?

[33 : 37] He's got world's best sinner, right? He's not ashamed of that fact. The fact of the matter is if you were to follow any church growth guru, they will tell you never mention the word sin.

Sin is the word that we are not to say anything about. But when we read our scriptures, we know that if there is no sin, there is no savior.

There's no sin. Why did Jesus have to die? Why did he have to come here? Why did he have to be beaten, scourged, tortured, crown of thorns on his head and then finally crucified on a cross because nobody sinned?

It's why Jesus says, I came not for the healthy, but for the unhealthy. Philip Ryken, a well-known writer and pastor, says, of all the world's religions, Christianity is the only religion that is for bad people.

If you think you are a good person, you don't need Jesus. So a testimony that doesn't include any mention of your sin and your desperate need of a savior is not really a testimony that gives glory to God.

[35 : 09] If you fail to mention your sin, it's a testimony that gives glory to you because somehow in that story, you're going to have to say how I found Jesus, how I was smart enough to understand Jesus, or how I live such a good night, Jesus revealed himself to me.

No, the story of the gospel is, I understand that in my righteousness and in my immorality and in my whatever thing I was involved in actually took control of every aspect of me and it wasn't until Jesus reached down and pulled me out of that and I recognized it and I said, Jesus, forgive me, have I gotten and understood the freedom that comes from Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to check out the second thing about Paul's testimony here. So first he shares with us that he is a sinner. Now a testimony needs to help the listener understand God's purpose in salvation.

A testimony needs to demonstrate how wonderful God's grace, power, and patience is. The fact of the matter is every testimony has to have God as the hero.

Amen? Amen? He was the one. Can you believe how patient he was? I was married for like 30 years and through those first 20 years I didn't even love my wife.

[36 : 34] How patient God was with me. And then finally he broke through. We've heard those stories, right? Some of us, we know those stories. Look after the mistake, mistake, mistake.

God should have sent a bolt of lightning and wiped me off the earth. But he didn't. He was patient with me.

He was long-suffering with me and my sin. Jesus must have the patience of Job. Isn't that the truth?

When we look back at our lives, God is a mighty patient God, isn't he? Even in our salvation, we see that we still need to live by his wonderful grace and mercy.

See, our testimonies are means for more worship to God. That God is glorified in our salvation. Let's take a closer look at verse 13.

[37 : 38] It says, Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. See, a blasphemer is one who speaks evil of Jesus Christ.

As you know, Paul was one of the chief prosecutors of Christians. Like I said, he raided their homes. He traveled to various cities. He approved of murdering Christians and trying to force them to blaspheme the name of Jesus.

He was a man who was driven by violence and the desire to inflict harm as a bully. In fact, in Acts 26, Paul testifies before King Agrippa, and this is Paul sharing his testimony again, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme. And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

[39 : 07] Why can Paul speak so freely about his past? Because he knows he's been renewed by Jesus Christ, and he's no longer the same person.

That's why we can speak about our past. We're not that person anymore. We are changed. Verse 12 says, Now there's three things here.

One, God gave Paul strength. Two, God or Jesus judged Paul faithful. And Jesus appointed Paul to service.

Notice in everything that has happened, Paul can't take credit for anything. So gave strength. Paul doesn't brag that he was able to rely on his own inner strength, his education or physical prowess.

But he brags on God's strength in doing God's work. Like I said, if you know the history of Paul, you know that this man endured much for the sake of the gospel.

[40 : 19] He was in prison, tortured, shipwrecked, lonely, cast aside, abandoned by his colleagues. And it wasn't his own strength that got him through those things.

But it was God's strength. To be judged faithful. This verse does not mean that Paul was rewarded because he was inherently trustworthy.

No, it means because of the strength God gave him, he was faithful with the task given to him. So everything that Paul is talking about is about God.

Amen. All these things. Hey, we revere Paul. Paul's probably, you know, the most incredible of all the apostles as he went out and shared with the Gentiles. Yet it's not me.

I don't testify to me. I testify to the Lord. And finally appointed to service. Paul was appointed to service.

[41 : 20] It was not earned. This word service here, he means lowly, humble service. It wasn't the type of service that brings one's glory, but it brings God glory.

The idea of serving, although inherent, is the idea of humbly giving yourself of yourself. One author writes, The difference between proud serving versus humble heart serving is proud.

Unbroken people have a desire for self-advancement or to seek privileges beyond their position. They are driven to be recognized and appreciated.

Their attitude is, this ministry is privileged to have me. Broken people, on the other hand, have a sense of unworthiness. They're thrilled to be used at all and eager for others to get the credit.

When they think of their involvement in the church, they say, I don't deserve to serve in this ministry.

[42 : 27] And they are willing to do anything. It was interesting. At one of my former churches, it was pretty big, about 15,000 people.

There was this one couple at one of the doors. And when people came in, they would recognize the one man because he was actually a CEO of one of the Fortune 500 companies. And the only thing he wanted to do was hand out the brochure.

And everybody says, you know, shouldn't he be using one of those guys as an elder or some other thing to head up a ministry? And I'll tell you, he loved being at the front door with his wife. Just welcoming people to church.

And his attitude is, let me share with you the gospel that changed the lives of my wife and I. Please come for him. There was no higher calling in a church than to invite people in to come hear about Jesus.

So to answer your question, why does Paul receive mercy? Verse 13, he says, but I received mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord overflowed with me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

[43 : 36] Isn't that how we were before we knew Jesus? Jesus, we're stupid, foolish people. We acted ignorantly. But Paul is saying, I received mercy because he didn't know what he was doing.

It's still sin. He's still accountable. But he did not know he was persecuting Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The difference between him and the false teachers is that the teachers know the truth and yet set themselves against the gospel of grace.

And the second reason that Paul finds mercy is found in verse 16. He says, but I received mercy for this reason.

That in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Basically, he's saying, if God can save a wicked sinner like me, how much more can he save you?

[44 : 44] And Paul is so excited. If you notice in verse 17, it's actually a doxology.

It's almost as if he breaks out in song. To the king of the ages, immortal, invisible. The only God be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Here he's declaring that God is eternal, immortal, immortal beyond the ravishes of death and decay, invisible beyond the limits of every horizon.

And he is the only God. See, God is the hero of our testimony, not ourselves. But I want to conclude with you again on verse 18.

This charge I entrust you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you.

[45 : 43] That by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith in a good conscience. Do you know you, as believers in Christ, have been entrusted with something as well?

You have been entrusted with the precious news of Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus Christ, just before he died, has imploring his disciples, you must go and make disciples of men, teaching, baptizing them, and teaching them all that I taught you.

He's entrusting you as well with that. That this is your charge. It doesn't say in here, well, except Phil and John and George and Josephine.

No, it means everybody. That our responsibility is to help people grow in their faith. And you want to know one of the most effective ways to teach someone about their faith?

You share your testimony. My challenge to you is write it out. Practice it. Share it with a friend.

[47 : 00] Come visit Dave or I. We would love to work with you to help you come up just to formulate, make sure it's all right in far as theologically how you express your opinions.

And then I would encourage you to share that with people. I want you to tell someone your testimony. I want you to tell them that you were a sinner.

That you were someone who needed the grace of God. I want you to tell them that you were trapped in your pursuit of self-righteousness. But you've given that up to pursue God's righteousness.

Share that you were so selfish that your wife should have left you years ago. But tell them in God's great mercy he spared your husband, your family, your job, your friends, so that you could be there today to share the gospel with them.

You know what else is a great testimony? Communion.

[48 : 11] Do you guys get that? This is a testimony. This is a testimony of our belief in Jesus Christ that we believe the things that I have been teaching today.

That we believe that we were once lost and now found. So in John, on the last night of that Passover before Jesus would go to die, Jesus expressly shared with them this dinner and he asked them to carry it on as a continued testimony to those around them that we have our hope that Jesus Christ is coming again.

Amen? That he in fact is conquering death. And not only that, but he's going to come out to wipe out all this sin and death. And that he has come to rule, to sit on the throne.

And what's interesting is yesterday we had that time for Nate's funeral. A better word than funeral is a testimony to his life on how he lived it and reflected Jesus and what he did right.

So I'm just going to ask the music guys to come on up and girls. And then the way we do communion here is a few things.

[49 : 28] We believe that you need to have a testimony that you have to profess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. That you are following him. That your life is a reflection of the reality that you are a believer in Jesus Christ.

Just by being a part of this group of people, we can all attest to your walk. That yes, that person is a follower of Jesus. What kind of witness would we give to people who were, say, that person was out there scamming people on houses or running a horrible business, ripping off the city.

And they showed up and said, hey, I want to share communion. We'd say, no, first of all, let me tell you about the love of Jesus and what he did for you. And then when you're saved and you accept that, then you can come to this table.

Because if we just allowed this, what would we be saying about Jesus? So what we ask is that you both collect the bread and the wine. And then after, remain seating.

So you come down these middle aisles and then go out the other way. If you have unconfessed sin, we ask that you would first go and confess that sin to a brother or sister that you may have hurt or that relationship is broken.

[50 : 45] Let me pray for you before we all come. Let me pray for you before this table. Dear Lord, holy, heavenly Father, we just thank you for your testimony. We thank you for Paul's testimony.

We thank you that you call us to testify to the truths of our faith, O Lord. And one of the strongest testimonies we have as believers in Christ, as a group of people, is that we come to commemorate your death and resurrection as you commanded us to until you return.

We do this because we testify to the truth of the gospel that we believe in, which is presented to us in the words of Scripture. Father, I know many of us here, we say we're not perfect and we know the sins and we thank you for your patience with us.

We thank you for the mercy that you bestow upon us. We thank you for the love that you have for us as your children. Father, I pray that we would use this time, even before coming and taking the elements here.

May we take these few minutes to confess our sins before the Lord. Father, we thank you for the love that you have for us as your children.

[52 : 39] So, Father, we give you thanks for this opportunity where we can come as a group of people to testify to who you are and the difference and changes that you have brought about in our lives.

We ask these things in your most holy, heavenly name. Amen.