

The Testimony of All Believers (Ephesians 2:1-10)

Introduction

There is an account in Mark 7 that has always interested me. There was a deaf man who was brought to Jesus. Jesus healed the man of his deafness and also his speech impediment. Then, He gave orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to testify of the miracle.

(Mark 7:32-37) "And they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they entreated Him to lay His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly. And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. And they were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

All of us have been given the orders to testify, and it is difficult to get people to testify. I believe that there are several reasons that people do not testify. First, they are not genuinely excited about what God is doing in their life. When we are excited about something, as the people were about the healing of the deaf and dumb man, you will tell everybody about it. People testify all the time about their hole in one, 12-point trophy they bagged, or their new car. They are excited about these things.

In the Vision presentation that most of you have seen, I shared with you how important it is for all of us to be passionately in love and excited about the Lord. When we are excited about what God is doing, we will have no problem with evangelism. We will be like the account in Mark 7 that we will widely proclaim what He has done and is doing. I pray that all of us will be excited and passionate about the Lord.

For us to be excited about what God is doing, we must see and be a part of what He is doing. We can't be living selfish lives; we must be about the Father's business. We must also be people of prayer. We have been praying for God to do things that go exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. We have to be people of faith. We must be risk takers. We must pray for the sick. We must give opportunity for God's power to work through us. John Wimber said that he prayed for 1,000 people before the first one got healed.

(Ephesians 3:20-21) "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, {21} to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

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When that 1,000th person got healed, do you think that they kept quiet about it? No way. The Vineyard church's five famous words are, "Can I pray for you?" This got started because people were so excited about what God began to do that everyone wanted in on the action.

I feel blessed to be part of what God is doing in the East Mountains. I feel blessed to have each and every one of you in this church plant. You have a heart to pray. You have a desire to see God move. And God will move. And people will begin to testify about what God is doing. We will not be able to stop people from sharing. And that is a good thing.

We are called to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. A witness is one who testifies before others of what he has seen, heard, or experienced. You and I are called to testify about what God has done and is doing in our lives. It is the primary way that the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed, and it is how the kingdom of God is advanced.

(Acts 1:8) "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

The account in Mark 7 is a healing testimony. There are numerous kinds of testimonies. There are financial testimonies about how God provided. There are prayer testimonies of how God answered a specific prayer. There are deliverance testimonies. There are all kinds of testimonies. As we move through the book of Ephesians, we come to this passage about our salvation testimonies. I have titled it, the testimony of all believers.

Our salvation is something that everyone of us should be excited about. My life was radically changed 37 years ago when Christ entered into my life. Praise God that I am not the same selfish, and hard-hearted person that I was prior to becoming a Christian. Praise God for what He has done and is doing through me as I daily yield my life to Him. Every one of us should be excited about our salvation testimony.

There are three parts to this testimony. First, there is our life before Christ. Second, there is the testimony of how we came into a relationship with Christ. Third, there is our life since then. I have included a more detailed outline in your notes. Let's read the text.

(Ephesians 2:1-10) "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, {2} in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. {3} Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. {4} But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, {5} even when we were dead in our transgressions,

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made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), {6} and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, {7} in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. {8} For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast. {10} For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Subject:

What Is The Testimony Of All Believers?

Complements:

1. We were all dead in our sins.
 - a. We walked according to the course of this world.
 - b. We walked according to the prince of the power of the air.
 - c. We walked according to the spirit that is in the world.
 - d. We were sons of disobedience.
 - e. We lived in the lusts of the flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and mind.
 - f. We were children of wrath.
2. We were saved by the grace of God.
 - a. He made us alive with together with Christ.
 - b. He raised us up with Him.
 - c. He seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
 - d. It was a gift of God, not as a result of works so that none of us could boast.
3. We were created in Christ Jesus for good works.
 - a. We are God's workmanship.
 - b. God prepared works beforehand for us to walk in.

In this passage, Paul's first point about our life before Christ is that we were dead in our sins. We walked according to the course of this world. We walked according to the prince of the power of the air. We walked according to the spirit that is in the world. We were sons of disobedience. We lived in the lusts of the flesh and indulged in the desires of the flesh and mind. We were children of wrath.

Paul tells us in Romans that all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. He also says that the wages of sin is death. This is exactly what he shares in Ephesians. We were all disobedient and sinful. We were all dead in our sins.

Next, Paul shares how God has made us alive together with Christ. We were dead in our

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sins and now He has made us alive in Christ. Just as the Father has raised Christ from the dead, when we received Christ into our lives, he has given resurrection life to us. We celebrate this in baptism. We are buried with him through baptism, and raised up with Him to life.

(Romans 6:3-5) "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? {4} Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. {5} For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,"

Paul also states that we have been seated with Him in the heavenly places. We have a home and citizenship in heaven. We have an inheritance to look forward to. We are not second class citizens, but those who are seated with Him in heavenly places.

There are a couple of other points about our salvation that I would like to briefly share. First, there has been a transfer in the spiritual world. We were called out of the kingdom of darkness into His marvelous light. We were once under the power of the kingdom of darkness. Now, praise God, we are in the kingdom of light. We are no longer people of wrath, but we are people who have received mercy. Peter summarizes what has happened in 1 Peter 2:9-10.

(1 Peter 2:9-10) "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; {10} for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY."

Another point that is related is that it is not by works that we receive this kingdom. Paul writes that it is "by grace that we have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." We cannot earn our salvation. We cannot gain admission to heaven by any of our good deeds. It is not as a result of works. There is no room for boasting about our salvation.

(Ephesians 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Paul reiterates this in Titus 3:5-6, when he says that He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

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(Titus 3:5-6) "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, {6} whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,"

Paul writes that "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, made us alive together with Christ." It was Christ's love. It was Christ's rich mercy. It was God's grace. It was God who raised us up. It was God that has seated us with Him in the heavenly place. We did not and could not do any of those things. All we could do is simply believe and receive Him into our lives by confessing Him as Lord. It is by His grace that we have been saved.

(Ephesians 2:4-7) "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, {5} even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), {6} and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, {7} in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

The third point of our testimony is what God is doing in our lives since that point of salvation. He says that we are His workmanship. God is doing a work in each of us. All of us are at different points in the work process. For some of us, He may be helping us with our identity and self image. For others, He is dealing with forgiveness and bitterness, dealing with the things in our past. He is trying to free us up.

For others, he is dealing with selfishness. Our selfishness is being revealed through relational struggles. We insist on being MacDonald's people, having it our way. This is a recipe for poor relationships. Paul tells us in Philippians that we are to do nothing from selfishness. We are to consider others as more important than ourselves. We are to not just look out for our interests, but also the interests of others.

(Philippians 2:3-4) "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; {4} do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

In a marriage, are you looking out for the interests of your spouse? Are you merely looking out for your interests? Are you selfish with your time? Are you selfish with your desires? Do you insist on getting what you want? Do you have humility of mind or are you always right? Do you consider your spouse more important than yourself? Are you trying to help your spouse accomplish his/her goals and dreams, or are you expecting him/her to help you accomplish your priorities? Do you expect your spouse to serve you, or are you looking for ways to serve your spouse? We are God's workmanship and God is

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seeking to conform us to His image.

(Ephesians 2:10) "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

In addition to being His workmanship, we are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in. All of us have been uniquely created and formed in the womb. God has a unique plan for each of us. He has prepared good works for us to walk in. We saw in our series on what God is building, that we are the body. Each of us is a different part of the body and is to function in different ways. We need what every part has to offer. That is how the body is going to be built up and grow.

When God created each of us, He created us for good works. He had unique gifts and abilities in mind when He created us. We were not accidents, but were carefully, fearfully, and wonderfully made. Look at what David says in Psalms 139:13-16.

(Psalms 139:13-16) "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. {14} I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. {15} My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. {16} Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

Paul uses the same terminology that David uses. We are His works. We are His workmanship. We have been wonderfully created. He has carefully made and created us for specific works to walk in. What is it that God created you to do? What are the specific works that God has uniquely gifted and created you to accomplish? There is probably no one else in the body that can minister exactly like you. You have been carefully created for good works to walk in.

This is a quick summary of our passage in Ephesians 2:1-10. As I was praying about the passage this week, I was impressed to share some helpful suggestions for sharing our testimonies. Peter tells us that we are always to be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us. He goes on to say that we should do it with gentleness and reverence. These are some attitudes that we are to have when we share. I would like to spend a few minutes discussing some thoughts about how to share our testimony.

(1 Peter 3:15) "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;"

Seven Attitudes For Sharing Our Testimonies

The testimony should include the main points of the gospel. People need to see clearly how you came to Christ. They need to know that you recognized that you had missed the mark, that you had sinned. Your testimony needs to include how Jesus paid the price for your sins. Your testimony needs to show how you received Christ into your life. If this person never heard from another Christian, will he know how to enter into a relationship with Christ by what you have shared. We need to include the gospel message.

But, the message of our testimonies will not be readily accepted or received if we do not share it with the right attitude. Here are six attitudes that we need to have when sharing our testimonies.

1. Share with gentleness. (1 Peter 3:15, 1 Cor 2:1-5)

Peter gives two specific attitudes, We are to share with gentleness and reverence. People are far more receptive to us when we share with gentleness. Solomon says that gentleness turns away wrath. When we share with gentleness, we diffuse contentions and strife. We encourage openness and receptivity.

Another way of looking at gentleness is meekness or humility. Notice the tone of our passage in Ephesians today. It is not as a result of works, lest any man should boast. We were dead in our sins. We were dead in our trespasses. We had nothing to brag about. The focus of our testimony should be about Christ's mercy and grace, not how great we are.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul wrote that he did not proclaim to them the testimony of God with superiority of speech or of wisdom. Instead, he came in weakness and in fear and in trembling. His message was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that their faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Our testimony should reflect a spirit of gentleness and humility, but that does not mean it must be powerless. We need to be full of faith and boldness when we share, but come with an attitude of meekness.

(1 Corinthians 2:1-5) "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. {2} For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. {3} And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. {4} And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, {5} that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

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2. Share with Reverence (1 Peter 3:15)

Peter also says that we need to share with reverence. The King James Version says that we need to share with meekness and fear. I have heard many people share their testimony and boast about the women they had and how enjoyable the things of the world were. This is not the attitude that we find in our passage. We find that we were disobedient. We were dead in our trespasses. We need to share with a spirit of fear and contrition. Some people share in such a way that I wonder if they are really contrite about the things that they did. We need to share with gentleness, meekness, humility, contrition and fear.

3. Share with sincerity. (2 Cor 2:15-17)

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians that we are a fragrance of Christ to people. He goes on to share that we are to share our lives with sincerity. If we do not share with humility, gentleness, contrition, and fear, people will not sense sincerity in us. Without sincerity, people will cast aside our testimony and not take it seriously. Therefore, it is important for us to share with the right attitude.

(2 Corinthians 2:15-17) "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; {16} to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? {17} For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God."

4. Share With Discretion.

Another point that we can pick up in our passage today is the lack of details. This shows discretion. Paul writes that we walked according to our lusts. He does not give specific details or how we walked in our lusts. We do not want to cause our listener to stumble. We do not want their thoughts to go down a wrong bunny trail of sin.

I worked with a man a number of years ago who had been struggling with a cocaine addiction for 18 years. Whenever he saw a Coca Cola can, it took him immediately to getting a fix. He used Coca Cola cans to heat up his cocaine before injecting it. If we were delivered from a drug problem, it would be better not to go into specifics that may cause a brother to stumble. It would be better to be general and say that we walked according to the lusts of the flesh. It is okay to say that we struggled with drugs, but do not go into details about it. If you struggled with sexual immorality, share that you were living an immoral life, but God, rich in mercy, saved you and made you alive in Christ.

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5. Share With Enthusiasm.

The word enthusiasm is made up of two Greek words: en + theo. It literally means possessed by God. When the deaf and dumb man in Mark 7 was healed, he shared enthusiastically with others. He could not contain the joy and excitement. He had been touched by God and his life was forever changed. He could not help but share enthusiastically.

6. Share With Hope.

Peter writes that we are to give an account of the hope that is in us. If people see the joy and enthusiasm in us, they will want us to give account for the hope that is in us. They are looking for that same hope and joy that we have. Our testimony should be one of hope. The gospel is good news. Our testimony should reflect that. It should give hope to those who have been beaten down by the world. It should give hope to those who are feeling desperate and hopeless. Our testimony should inspire faith and give hope to people.

Notice in our passage today that Paul says that God is rich in mercy. He says that He loves us. He says that He makes us alive with Him. Our testimony should help people see God's love, mercy, and kindness towards us. Our testimony should indicate how God has a plan and purpose for each of us. He has created us with unique gifts and abilities to make us useful and fruitful for Him. He came to give us purpose so that we could live a fulfilling life. Our testimonies should help people see that their best days are yet to come. David writes in Psalms 27:13 that he would have despaired unless he had believed he would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. This gives people hope.

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7. Share with Grace

Paul writes in Colossians 4:6 that we need to season our speech with grace, so that we may know how to respond to people. When people feel like we are judgmental, they will not open up to us. When they sense a lack of grace, they will clam up. However, if our speech is seasoned with grace, people will open up to us and will be receptive. When we have open doors of communication, it allows us to listen to people. When we listen and hear their concerns and questions, it gives us wisdom about how to respond appropriately to them. Our testimonies need to reflect God's grace in our life, and it should also extend grace to other people.

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(Colossians 4:6) "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."

As an application today, we are going to give opportunity to you to share your testimony. I have intentionally kept the message short to allow time for us to share. In order for more people to be given the opportunity, we are going to ask you to limit your sharing to three minutes. I will give grace from three to five minutes. However, at five minutes I will get up and introduce the next person. This is nothing personal; it is just a time limit that we must live with today.

Prayer: "Father, I ask You to bless our time of sharing today. I ask You to stimulate and build our faith with the testimonies that we hear. May it make our faith rest on You and Your power. May our testimonies reflect Your grace and mercy towards us. May it bring a spirit of gratitude and praise. May You be honored and glorified in our sharing. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

Introduction (Mark 7:32-37, Eph 3:20-21, Acts 1:8, Eph 2:1-10)

Summary of Passage

- 1. We were dead in our sins. (Eph 2:1-5, Rom 6:3-5, 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- 2. We were saved by grace. (Eph 2:4-7, 2:8-9, Titus 3:5-6)
- 3. We were created in Christ Jesus for good works. (Eph 2:10, Phil 2:3-4, Ps 139:13-16)

Seven Attitudes For Sharing Our Testimonies (1 Peter 3:15)

- 1. Share with _____. (1 Peter 3:15, 1 Cor 2:1-5)
- 2. Share with _____. (1 Peter 3:15)
- 3. Share with _____. (2 Cor 2:15-17)
- 4. Share With _____.
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