

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Acts 28:23-31

Sunday, November 25, 2012

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What would you do if you had a captive audience, similar to a guard, as Paul did, and were under house arrest for a crime that you had not committed, but for your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? What do you need to do to prepare yourself, if something like this should happen to you?

I would pray for my guard to come to faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. If in Paul's situation, I would try to make the guard's and my time together as pleasant as possible, and pray for the Lord Jesus to protect me from a guard that might be abusive or exceed his authority. I would try to do my job well to support myself, and ask the Holy Spirit to help me show the love and kindness of Jesus Christ to everyone. I would try to live, the Holy Spirit being my helper, according to all the truth I knew about God and reality, and I would pray and look for opportunities to teach the truth to my guard and pray that he would also listen attentively when I taught the truth to others.

I would prepare myself by trying to prayerfully and obediently live as close as possible to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I would study and learn as much as possible from the Bible, because it might be taken from me. I would try to learn and practice a trade or profession I could use to support myself in difficult times.

2. After all of the mistreatment Paul suffered from his fellow Jews, what attitude did Paul take toward them? How easy is it for people today to take the attitude that Paul took toward those who mistreat them? What can we do to try to maintain a Christ-like attitude toward others?

Paul treated them and spoke to them with kindness, and he also tried to show them the love of Jesus Christ for them. He tried to understand their attitude and refusal to believe on the basis of what the Bible taught about their attitude and refusal to believe; therefore, he knew their rejection of him was based on their disobedience to God, resulting in their refusal and inability to understand the truth of God. He eventually bid them a kind farewell, explaining to them their situation from what the Bible taught – perhaps they would understand, with the Holy Spirit's help, and turn back to God and to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is not easy, because we tend to take people's rejection of us personally, instead of understanding that they may be rejecting us because they have previously rejected the truth of God and have refused to obey God in certain areas of their lives.

We can keep praying for grace, but at some point we may need to depart from them or send them away from us.

3. Why does the Bible show at least three different approaches to dealing with those who oppose God and the kingdom of God: the way of Jesus, the way of Stephen, and the way of Paul? [Tradition teaches that Paul was later martyred, but the Bible does not teach this.]

All three servants of God the Father were inspired and filled by the Holy Spirit to say and do what they said and did. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures by not defending himself when on trial; but he did answer honest questions from Pilate. Stephen preached the Bible, applied it to his listeners and called his listeners to repent before they furiously stoned him to death. In Rome, because he was a prisoner, Paul may have been less confrontational than Stephen when he spoke to unbelieving Jews, but he did speak boldly and did point the unbelievers back to what the Bible taught, as did Stephen. The Bible shows these three ways so we will know that God does not mechanically require only one way for those who follow Jesus when they face those who refuse to believe the truth and be saved. The three hold in common praying to God and obeying God and following the Bible's teachings as the Holy Spirit leads them. We can do the same.

4. Why is the use of reason important in teaching the good news of Jesus? Why is giving an explanation for why you believe in Jesus important? Why is appealing to what the Bible teaches important when you speak to someone about Jesus and the good news?

God gave us minds and logical rules of reason to help us live according to the truth, the truth of God and reality, and to help us convincingly share or teach the truths to others – truths to live by each day and forever. Jesus also taught using reason, and God through the prophets in the Old Testament asked people to reason with Him.

If we tell people to believe something without giving them good and sufficient reasons, we will not prepare them to keep believing in difficult times or if unbelievers try to use "reason" to convince them to stop believing in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit can use the Word of God, the Bible, as a tool to help someone reason, understand, and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit can help someone use their reasoning powers better so they can understand the Bible, understand that the Bible is true, understand that the Bible is the true Word of God written.

5. Would you be willing to teach the Bible freely to others at your own expense? Sunday school teachers do this, as well as others. Paul also received support from various churches in his missionary work (see his Letter to the Philippians). What are the benefits of supporting pastors, preachers, teachers, evangelists, and others as they share the gospel in

word and deed so they do not need to spend the major part of each day “tent making”?

I join with millions in doing so.

If we support them, they have more time to prepare themselves to do the ministry that God has called and equipped them to do. Otherwise, many would need to have jobs that would not permit them or give them the time to also teach about Jesus while they worked; so, by supporting these “gifts to the church,” many will have more time and energy to fulfill God’s purposes for their lives and those they serve.

— © Copyright 2012 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. You may reprint or reproduce Study Hints for Thinking Further for not-for-profit use.