

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

## Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 09.19.2021

### KEEP GOING - DO NOT QUIT: ACTS 23:1-11

#### Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Many of us have probably heard the familiar song from Pinocchio, *Let your Conscience be your Guide*. The lyrics read, "When you get in trouble and you don't know right from wrong, when you meet temptation, and the urge is very strong, take the straight and narrow path and always let your conscience be your guide". Notice some of the Biblical parallels in these lyrics. Straight and narrow is the way that leads to life (Matt. 7:14) and our conscience, guided by the Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Our conscience is part of your human psyche (our mind). God created it when he gave you the abilities of self-awareness and rational thinking. God has also put knowledge of Himself and of basic right or wrong in every person (Romans 2:14-15). Therefore, everyone is "without excuse" (Romans 1:20). When we became saved, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us guides us unto righteousness. Hebrews 9:14 says the blood of Christ not only saves us, but it cleanses our conscience so we understand what honors God. "If anyone, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them". (James 4:17, NIV). Paul refers several times to his own conscience being "good" or "clear" (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Corinthians 4:4). Paul examined his own words and deeds and found them to be in accordance with God's standards. His conscience verified the integrity of his heart. Let's get into our study...

1. Describe a time you either listened or did not listen to your conscience. What was the result?
2. How might an analogy of a clean or dirty window be used to describe a conscience?
3. What stood out to you during this week's study?

#### Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

##### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Acts 23:1-5

When standing before the Sanhedrin, Paul prefaced his remarks with a statement, that throughout his life he had lived in all good conscience. This greatly angered the high priest, Ananias. How could one who had turned from Judaism to Christianity claim such innocence? The high priest then ordered the prisoner to be slapped on the mouth. Paul immediately snapped back to Ananias that God would strike him for being a flimsy wall white washed to appear firm. Paul was essentially calling Ananias a hypocrite. Those in attendance were shocked by this rebuke because Ananias was the high priest. Paul then quoted Exodus 22:28, "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people".

1. Paul persecuted Christians before he became a believer. How could Paul stand in all good conscience before the Sanhedrin? (Romans 8:1)
2. Why is there no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus? (Romans 8:2-4)
3. Paul called the high priest a hypocrite for falsely judging him according to the Law. Jesus also had an encounter with the high priest the night before He was crucified. He challenged the high priest to "bear witness of the evil" of which He was accused; however, the high priest could find no evidence (John 18:19-23). Have you ever been falsely judged? If so, what were some of the feelings that may have surfaced?
4. Are there hypocrites in the church today? What is a first step to avoid hypocrisy in the church? (Matt. 7:3-5)
5. What is the difference between spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 6:5) and judgement that comes from a hypocritical and unkind spirit (Luke 6:37, Rom 14:3)?
6. Why is it honorable to fight for what is right? (1 Sam. 2:20, Ps. 119:31-32)

## **Visitation/Restoration in 2021**

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 23:6-10**

Sensing there was a lack of agreement between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, Paul decided to widen the rift by declaring himself to be a Pharisee, who was on trial for believing in the resurrection of the dead. In contrast to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, denied resurrection of the dead as well as the supernatural. The Romans had also trusted the Sadducees and placed them in charge. Paul's words provoked the crowd and some of the scribes of the Pharisees defended Paul's innocence. The controversy between the opposing believers became so heated, the commander ordered the soldiers to escort Paul back to the barracks.

7. At times, the Word of God brings necessary division (Luke 12:51-52). Why is this division necessary? (1 Peter 1:15-16)
8. Ecclesiastes 3 says "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven". Pastor Ray mentioned today is a time of division. What are some clear lines of division being established today?
9. Why might it be dangerous to follow the majority? (Matt. 7:14) How can you discern what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit? (Hebrews 4:12)

### **Applying God's Word**

**What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.**

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 23:11**

C.S. Lewis wrote, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened." (*The Great Divorce*). God does not force people into heaven, but He does allow us to choose. He desires it because He deeply cares for us. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:8-10). We are to abide in Him, and Him in us (John 15:4-7) and to testify of all God has done in our life (23:11).

1. The analogy of a dirty and clean window was used to describe the conscience. Do you have a "good" or "clear conscience" today? Are there areas in your life requiring repentance? (Rom. 3:23).
2. There is no condemnation, no guilty verdict, no punishment for those who are in Christ Jesus. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened. Are you abiding in Christ Jesus today? (John 15:4-7).
3. The Lord said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome" (23:11). Although you may have done a good job so far, there is still much work to do. Who might you testify of the Lord to this week?

### **PRAYER**

Lord, Thank You for giving us the abilities of self-awareness and rational thinking. Thank You for putting the inherent knowledge of You in us and for the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us and guides us unto Your righteousness. Thank You for the blood of Christ, that not only saves us, but cleanses our conscience so we may understand what honors You. Please forgives us if we have known right, yet have fallen short of Your glory. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

*"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14, NKJV)*