

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 10.17.2021

BLESSED DETERMINATION: ACTS 25

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.

This past Saturday was Cheshvan 10 on the Biblical calendar. It was on this day, Noah and family were invited by God to come through a single door into the ark (Genesis 7:1). Noah and his family then choose to enter the ark (7:7). Then God shut the door (7:16) and the rains of judgement fell for 40 days and 40 nights. Noah and his family found salvation in the ark covered with pitch (6:14), high above the floods. In the same way, Jesus said, "I Am the Door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved," (John 10:9, NASB). We are presented with an image of a single door, and invited by God to come through the door of Jesus. As we choose to come through the Door, we enter His Ark, covered not with pitch, but covered with the blood of Jesus Christ. This Ark provides safety, lifting us high above the waters of judgement. Paul understood this analogy. Again and again, we find him emphasizing the phrase, "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (i.e., Romans 3:23-24, 6:23, Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-9). All the blessings and goodness God has for us, be it salvation, victory, peace of heart, and/or revival, God has provided for us and invites us to come through the easily accessible Door of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Let's get into our study....

1. The ark was a large boat. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits (450 Feet) and the height of it thirty cubits (45 Feet) . . . and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof". Have you ever come aboard a large ship and cruised in open water? Describe the experience.
2. The door to salvation stands open, but the instant we draw our last breath, the Lord shuts it . . . forever. Jesus is that door to salvation. Have a few volunteers share their experience walking through the Door of salvation.
3. What stood out to you during this week's study?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 25:1-12

The Jews in Jerusalem had not given up and after two years, still wanted Paul put to death for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. After Festus took office in Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem. As soon as he arrived, the chief priests informed him of their charges against Paul. They urgently requested Festus send Paul to them in Jerusalem. Again, there was a plot to ambush him. But Festus, though he wanted to please the Jews, must have become aware of their plot. Thus, God used Festus to protect Paul from the renewed plots. Festus then went back down to Caesarea with some of the Jews who were in authority. There, the Jews could not prove any accusations against Paul. As before, Paul defended the gospel. Then, Festus asked Paul if he would go back up to Jerusalem to stand trial, but Paul knew what it would mean to go up to Jerusalem. So, as a Roman citizen's right, he appealed to Caesar. Festus must not have been pleased with Paul's demand to appeal to Caesar.

1. It must have been hard for Paul to listen to the same old accusations again and again. He must have felt like crying out "Enough is enough". He had learned long before, that God's grace is sufficient under the most trying circumstances (2 Corinthians 12:9). Describe a difficult time in your life when God's grace was sufficient.
2. Paul was in a position of weakness as a prisoner, but God's strength was there to help him answer with graciousness, wisdom, authority, and maturity. This was in strong contrast to the Jews accusing Paul. In our times of weakness, why is important to trust in God? (Proverbs 3:5-6)
3. Paul was passionately obsessed with proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What are some practical ways you can be more passionately obsessed with proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Perhaps reference how God has specifically made you. (Psalms 139:14).

Visitation/Restoration in 2021

4. In your judgment, why did Paul have appealed to Caesar instead of staying Jerusalem?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 25:13-27

King Agrippa II and Bernice came to Caesarea to bring official greetings and pay his respects to the new governor. Though Agrippa was educated in Rome, he was a Jew, and Festus would have looked to him as an authority in the Jewish religion. Festus consulted Paul's case to Agrippa. Festus explained how Paul affirmed a certain Jesus, who was dead, who rose, and is alive. Agrippa apparently had heard of Paul and of Jesus and had been wishing for an opportunity to hear Paul. The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and display. They paraded to the hearing with all their royal robes, attendees, and made a great majestic show. After Paul was brought in, Festus dramatically emphasized that all of Jerusalem wanted Paul's death. He then stated Paul had not committed any crime worthy of death. Festus pointed out it seemed unreasonable to send a prisoner to the emperor without a letter with the charges against him.

5. It is evident Paul had preached the gospel to Governor Festus. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (ROM 1:16). Why do you think there are instances Christians might be ashamed to share the gospel?
6. Festus stumbled to understand the resurrection of Jesus. Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important to the Christian faith? (1 Corinthians 15:14).
7. Paul faced many trials, but he waited and trusted in the Lord. God is the Master Chess player, moving the pieces of life for our benefit. How does this encourage us? (Exodus 14:14).
8. Although Paul was a prisoner, he was the most powerful man standing in the courtroom. He waited on the Lord, and the Lord took care of Paul. Why is important to wait upon the Lord? (Isaiah 40:31).

Applying God's Word

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

The Apostle Paul gives us an example of our main purpose in life. For all of us as believers, it's to share the good news that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. We've got to share that with our family, with our friends, and those who we encounter. When you have the purpose that God has for you, everything else falls into place. Jesus wants us all to be in Heaven with Him; however, He will not force us, but He invites us all to come through the Door. Jesus is the open door to Heaven and He is always waiting for us with arms wide open, ready to welcome us into His kingdom. Jesus is knocking on the door of our hearts saying: "Here I am!

1. Someday, we might stand trial before a political realm as Paul did. Today, if you were placed on trial for being a Christian, would a court have enough evidence to find you guilty?
2. We have one goal, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can your thoughts, your speech, and even your life decisions be better aligned to this goal?
3. Our purpose in life is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can you be more determined, for such a time as this, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ this week?

PRAYER

Lord, You are the great I Am. You are our Door and You are the Way, the truth and the life. Thank You that we can come to You through Jesus, our Redeemer, our Savior. Teach us to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and help us to be more determined to proclaim the gospel to our family, friends, and those who we encounter.

Jesus said, "I AM the Way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6)