

***The Story* Adult Study Guide**

For the Week of May 10, 2020

Chapter 30: "Paul's Final Days"



Key Events: Paul's arrest, his trip to Rome and his imprisonment, excerpts from Paul's epistles (letters)

Key Characters: Paul (see page 493 for a description)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: Acts 20-23, 27-28; Ephesians 1-6; 2Timothy 1-4

1. Throughout *The Story*, we have seen evidence of God's sovereignty (his power and authority). Give examples from Paul's ordeals in this chapter that demonstrate God's control to achieve his purpose.
2. What unlikely situations did Paul use as opportunities to witness? What are some unlikely situations in our lives that can serve as witness opportunities?
3. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul stated, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . But God made us alive with Christ." (Ephesians 2:1,4,5) Using this portion of Scripture (2nd paragraph on page 453), describe the two spiritual conditions.
4. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21) What does this mean? How does "submit to one another" apply to wives, husbands, children and fathers/parents? (page 455)
5. Describe the meaning and significance of these underlined words and phrases. "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (pages 457-458; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
6. Near the end of his life, Paul wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness." (page 458; 2 Timothy 4:7-8) Explain the nature of Christian boasting found in these words.

Prayer Suggestions

- Thank God for raising me up from spiritual death and making me alive in Christ.
- Pray that God continues to equip me to serve him through his Word and sacrament.

Study Guide Helps

1. God controlled the events and circumstances surrounding Paul, evident especially when he was in peril. Examples include: Roman soldiers arrested Paul and took him away when he was about to be killed by the Jewish rioters (p. 441); God preserved Paul's life by means of the Roman government and its laws regarding citizens (pp.443-447); the conspiracy to kill Paul was discovered and he was secretly taken away from Jerusalem (p. 445); God controlled nature and circumstances and did not allow Paul or his shipmates to die during their dangerous voyage (pp. 447-450); Paul didn't become ill or die when bitten by a poisonous snake (p. 450); evidence and historical tradition indicate that Paul was released from Roman imprisonment, allowing him to continue preaching.

2. God placed Paul into unique situations to testify about Jesus. He preached in any and all occasions, even when he was under duress and in peril: to not-so-receptive philosophers in Athens; to a number of Roman officials and soldiers; to an angry and threatening Jewish mob and the Sanhedrin; to his shipmates on the treacherous voyage to Rome; to islanders on Malta; to Jews and Gentiles during his two-year house arrest in Rome. God presents us with opportunities to witness Jesus in our words and actions even in stressful and emotional situations. These types of situations often serve as teachable moments. Participants can share unique and seemingly unlikely situations to witness, like times of danger, fear, tragedy, loss, sorrow, celebration, blessing, etc.

3. Dead in your transgressions and sins: this spiritual condition is unbelief – a person is separated from God and a life in Christ, a slave to sin (*the ways of this world*), controlled by the power of the devil (*ruler of the kingdom of the air*), on the path to eternal damnation in hell, and unable to change this condition by his/her own power or choosing. All people were born into this condition (*by nature*), and this lifestyle is characterized by wickedness and selfishness (*gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires*). Alive with Christ: this spiritual condition is belief – made possible only through the grace and power of God in Christ, who called us to saving faith through the Holy Spirit. Believers are spiritually alive with the peace and joy of forgiveness in Christ, the hope and confidence of life with Jesus now and forever in heaven, and the power to serve God as his *handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works*. This lifestyle is characterized by daily repentance, and obedience to God as an act of love and thanks to him.

4. This passage is associated with “be filled with the Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18 (not included in *The Story*). To submit means to yield one's own rights for the sake of others, to devote oneself for the good of others. “Submit to one another” means to willingly act in a loving, considerate, self-sacrificing way toward another, like Christ did. Submit does not mean to give up one's authority, since God has given authority to particular roles. God established the roles of husband, wife, child and parent to carry out his design and purpose for the family. God's design: a) *wives submit yourselves to your own husbands . . . as the church submits to Christ*; b) *the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church . . . husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies (more extreme expressions of devotion than the wife is called on to make)*; c) *children obey your parents in the Lord*; d) *fathers do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*. To understand the true nature and application of love and submission in these verses, we have to grasp the nature of love and submission between Christ and the church (believers).

5. Continue in what you have learned: Christian education never ends; the Spirit continues to grow our faith and increase wisdom in the Lord until we go home to heaven; don't become lacking and apathetic with our time in God's Word. Wise for salvation: the purpose of God's revealed Word in the Bible is to provide the only way to forgiveness and salvation through faith in Jesus; salvation is not possible without the Scriptures. God-breathed: refers to the verbal inspiration of the writing of the Bible; the Holy Spirit inspired his human pens to write down the Words of God; because the holy God is the author, the Word carries his authority and infallibility. Teaching: the activities of sharing and learning the truths of God. Rebuking: lovingly point out sin and errors and lead to repentance. Correcting: lovingly show the right and true way according to God's Word. Training: lead God's people to imitate Christ in their lifestyles, thoughts, words and actions. Equipped for every good work: all the uses of God's Word stated above prepare God's children to produce fruits of faith, i.e. obedient and righteous acts according to God's will.

6. A Christian cannot boast of his own spiritual achievements, because justification and sanctification are not accomplished by human effort. Paul is not patting himself on the back trumpeting his own virtues; rather he's boasting about what God accomplished in and through him. All Christians can boast about the privilege to serve as God's instruments to carry the gospel. *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.* (2 Corinthians 4:6-7) Through the Spirit, God preserves us in faith, guards the truth of his Word in our hearts and on our lips, and saves souls through our Christian witness. By God's grace alone, we receive “the crown of righteousness,” the glory of life everlasting. We boast about God's amazing mercy and blessings.