

## Acts 23

Introduction: As the Lord is completing His good work within us, he often allows us go through difficulties and trials. As we go through these trials, our perspective is limited. We don't have the capacity to understand what God is doing unless we hear from Him.

Q: As we listen for God's voice, asking for understanding, what should we expect to hear?

A: We should always expect to hear Him speak in terms of promises.

**Message: We understand God's work in our lives not by His explanations, but by His promises.**

Ever since at least chapter 19, the Holy Spirit has been communicating to Paul that he would eventually bear witness to Jesus in Rome, the capital of the empire in which he lived.

*Acts 19:21 (NKJV) When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."*

Around this same time, he wrote his letter to the Romans. There he made clear that he very much wanted to go to Rome and even hoped to go on to Spain after that.

*Romans 15:23-25 (NKJV) <sup>23</sup>But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup>whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. <sup>25</sup>But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.*

Now Paul is in Jerusalem, but things are not going as he hoped. He's been accused falsely of desecrating the temple. He was almost killed in a riot, was taken into custody by Roman soldiers and only his Roman citizenship saved him from being flogged half to death.

Paul might easily begin doubting whether he heard God correctly about going to Rome. He's probably wondering whether he'll leave Jerusalem alive. The Lord does not explain to Paul exactly what He is doing or why. Instead He gives Paul a promise to hold on to: He will one day get to preach Jesus in Rome.

This chapter begins with Paul before the Jewish council, or Sanhedrin. The Roman commander called this meeting at the end of the last chapter in the hopes of determining what Paul's exact crime was. We'll see that although, from our perspective, people may influence our lives in any number of ways, they can't change the fact that God keeps His promises to us.

- I. God keeps His promises when we're using our own wisdom. 23:1-10
- II. God keeps His promises when we face serious opposition. 23:11-15
- III. God keeps His promises when others are looking out for us. 23:16-22
- IV. God keeps His promises when others are looking out for themselves. 23:23-30
- V. God keeps His promises when others are simply doing their jobs. 23:31-35

- I. God keeps His promises when we're using our own wisdom. 23:1-10
  - A. 23:5 Using his own wisdom Paul first made a mistake and another time it worked out.
  - B. 23:8 Explain: Sadducees = liberals; Pharisees = legalists.

**Message: We understand God's work in our lives not by His explanations, but by His promises.**

- II. God keeps His promises when we face serious opposition. 23:11-15
  - A. 23:11 Jesus confirms the promise that Paul would eventually reach Rome.
  - B. 23:12-15 This qualifies as serious opposition, but Paul can remain confident, because he's trusting in the Lord's promise.

**Message: We understand God's work in our lives not by His explanations, but by His promises.**

- III. God keeps His promises when others are looking out for us. 23:16-22
  - A. 23:16 This is the only place in the Bible where any member of Paul's family is mentioned. He hears about the plot and saves Paul's life.  
  
Paul can remain confident, because he's trusting in the Lord's promise.

- IV. God keeps His promises when others are looking out for themselves. 23:23-30
  - A. 23:27 This is not entirely true. The commander originally wanted Paul scourged by his soldiers. He only found out about Paul's Roman citizenship at that point.
  - B. God is using the Roman commander to protect Paul, but part of his motivation is to make himself look good: "I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman." The Roman commander is writing to the Roman governor telling him how he's taking care of a Roman and protecting him from the Jews. He's making himself look good before his boss.  
  
But Paul can remain confident, not because of his nephew's help, not because of the commander's help, but because he's trusting in the Lord's promise.

**Message: We understand God's work in our lives not by His explanations, but by His promises.**

- V. God keeps His promises when others are simply doing their jobs. 23:31-35
  - A. Neither the governor nor the soldiers especially care about Paul. To them he's just another case. But Paul can remain confident, because he's trusting in the Lord's promise.

**Message: We understand God's work in our lives not by His explanations, but by His promises.**

## Conclusions: Seven Encouraging Promises to All Christians:

### 1. The Lord is using our trials to perfect (complete) us.

*Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you **will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ;*

*James 1:2-4 (NKJV) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be **perfect and complete**, lacking nothing.*

### 2. We can trust that the Lord will take care of our needs.

*Psalms 23:1-3 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd; **I shall not want.***

*<sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.*

*<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness, For His name's sake.*

*Matthew 6:25-34 (NKJV) <sup>25</sup>“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*

*<sup>28</sup>“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup>and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

*<sup>31</sup>“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

### 3. God's peace is available to us under any circumstance.

*Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV) You will keep him in **perfect peace**, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.*

*Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV) <sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup>and **the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*Colossians 3:15 (NKJV) And let **the peace of God** rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

#### 4. The Lord will always be with us.

*Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)* <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you **always**, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

*Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)* Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**”

#### 5. We have been given eternal life.

*1 John 2:25 (NKJV)* And this is the promise that He has promised us—**eternal life.**

#### 6. We look forward to the Rapture and the resurrection of the dead.

*1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV)* <sup>13</sup>But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore comfort one another with these words.

#### 7. The day is really coming when everything bad is going to end.

*Revelation 21:1-5 (NKJV)* <sup>1</sup>Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup>Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; **there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**”

<sup>5</sup>Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

**Message: We understand God's work in our lives not by His explanations, but by His promises.**