

CP — 11/26/23

Acts 18:12–23 - Promises Kept

Sermon Outline

Christ's three promises to Paul in Acts 18:10:

1. Presence ("for I am with you")
2. Protection ("no one will attack you to harm you")
3. People ("I have many in this city, who are my people")

1. Christ Keeps His Promises to Paul (18:12–17)

*The Jews attack but do not harm Paul.

- Jews' attacks on Paul: 13:5, 45, 50; 14:2, 5, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:12

*Gallio dismisses the charges and frees Paul.

- Paul freed physically from the mob.
- Paul freed spiritually to continue to preach.

Furthermore:

*Paul didn't say anything to incriminate himself,

*No precedent set against Paul's future witness

*Paul, for the third time, has not been found guilty of breaking Roman law (16:39, 17:9)

*Christianity still seen as a branch of Judaism. - thus they were not breaking Roman law by introducing a new religion! - grace!

*F. F. Bruce: "It probably served as a precedent for other Roman judges, especially as it proceeded from a man whose brother (Seneca) occupied a position of influence at the imperial court. It meant that for the next ten or twelve years, until imperial policy toward Christians underwent a complete reversal, the gospel could be proclaimed in the provinces of the empire without fear of coming into conflict with Roman law."

*God defended Paul! God used the Roman proconsul to defend His servant! God uses anyone and everything for His purposes!

2. Paul Keeps His Promises to Christ (18:18–23)

*Paul's attitude toward serving Christ - not to merit anything from Christ, but from love & devotion to Jesus for what He did for Paul! (2 Cor. 5:14–15; 12:15, Rom. 1:1, 14–15)

*Paul believed Christ's promises and stayed in Corinth. (18)

- He persevered even in persecution! He saw Christ keep his promises, and Paul was encouraged to keep on persevering! (Phil 2:12–13)

*Paul sought God's will in where to serve. (18–21)

- Stayed in Corinth
- Left Corinth
- Went to Ephesus
- Did not stay in Ephesus (left Aquila and Priscilla behind)
- Why did he do all these things? **"if God wills" (21), vow (18)**
 - 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Rom. 1:1; James 4:13–15)
 - his vow - some think it is a Nazarite vow of Num. 6:1–18

On Paul's Vow:

- **Bruce (NICNT):** “private vow, the fulfillment of which was an act of thanksgiving possibly for the divine promise of 18:10, which had been confirmed by his perseverance from harm throughout his Corinthian ministry.”
 - **Polhill (NAC):** “Generally one cut the hair at the end of the vow and made a sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem, throwing the shorn hair into the burnt offering as a part of the sacrifice. Some interpreters suggest that at Cenchrea Paul was beginning a vow that he would later complete in Jerusalem, but the past tense of the Greek verb indicates Paul had already taken the vow. There also is no evidence for cutting the hair at the initiation of a vow—only at its completion. A passage in Josephus seems to indicate the practice of cutting the hair elsewhere before going to Jerusalem to make the sacrifices. Perhaps this is what Paul was doing. In any event, the significance of the vow is that it shows Paul to have been a loyal, practicing Jew. In his mission to the Gentiles, he did not abandon his own Jewishness. He was still a “Jew to the Jews” and still continued his witness in the synagogues.”
 - **Marshall (TNTC):** “Jews made vows to God either in thankfulness for past blessings (such as Paul’s safekeeping in Corinth) or as part of a petition for future blessings (such as safekeeping on Paul’s impending journey); the present context inclines towards the former interpretation. A temporary Nazirite vow involved abstinence from alcohol and also from cutting one’s hair. Its conclusion was marked by shaving one’s hair completely off and offering a sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem (Num. 6:1–21; Acts 23:23–24). If this was the kind of vow undertaken by Paul, it implies that he intended to visit Jerusalem. Some scholars find it puzzling that Paul cut his hair in Cenchreae. There is no evidence that this could be done at the beginning of a vow. The alternative view would be that Paul’s action there marked the end of a vow previously taken. This view is usually rejected on the ground that vows could not be terminated outside Jerusalem. In fact, however, although the sacrifice had to be offered there, the shaving of the hair was permissible elsewhere (M. Nazir 3:6; 5:4).”
- Vow shows Paul’s devotion to Christ. Glimpse of his personal spiritual life!

*Paul did not rest on past success but continued to serve Christ. (22–23)

- goes to Caesarea, then Jerusalem, then Antioch, then Galatia/Phrygia
- end of second missionary journey

Small Group Questions

1. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you through the Bible passage and message? What stood out to you?
2. How did Jesus keep His promises to Paul? What is it important to note the second promise added “to harm you?” How did Gallio’s decision later protect Paul’s ministry?

3. Discuss which of God's promises in the Bible personally resonate with you. Which promises does the Holy Spirit bring to your mind a lot? Share some stories how God has kept His promises in faithfulness to you.
4. How did Paul view his motivation to serve Christ, to gain something or in response to what Christ had done? Why is this difference important? In what specific ways did Paul show that he sought God's will in his decisions?
5. Discuss what parts of Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:40–18:23) stood out most to you this fall. Share with your small group.