

Acts 28:11-16: "God to Us" 3/23/2025

Review & Intro:

Last week we looked at the **hospitality** of the Roman brothers. We saw how Paul was encouraged and looked at our own extensions of hospitality here at MRC particularly with reference to our weekly meals. In the book of Acts there are at least three other occasions demonstrating how hospitality was one of the marks of the early church (Acts 2:42-47, 10:17-29, 16:11-15). Additionally, we saw how this practice is commonplace, not just in the book of Acts, but throughout the Bible. Lastly, we saw how hospitality is elevated to a requirement of elders who lead the church. Hospitality is not an optional practice but part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. It is a reflection of the love of God poured into our hearts and into the laps of His people.

Today, we will focus on these two verses as Paul arrives in Rome and why this is such a big deal. You'll remember that Paul had written his letter to the Romans a few years earlier. In Rom 1:10, he expressed his desire to see them having consistently prayed for them. In Acts 23:11 and again in 27:24, God had promised that Paul that he would go to Rome. We see in these two verses that indeed, Paul did go to Rome and the promise was fulfilled.

The principle is clear: God makes and keeps promises. There is a word that we use to describe that act whereby God obligates Himself to His people and although it is not specifically mentioned here, we see it throughout the Bible. We call that phenomenon of making promises and obligations as a "covenant." This is how God relates to His people throughout the scriptures. Again, there is no special thing in this particular passage that calls it a covenant nor does anyone believe in the "Pauline covenant" and I'm not saying that. What I am saying is the Bible is full of God making and keeping promises. I am also saying that pattern is emblematic of His relationship with us as His people. What God has done in the past is both a pattern and a promise of what He will continue to do in the future.

What I would like to do today is conduct a brief, inexhaustive survey of the Bible to see how God does this.

II. The Promise **Fulfilled: God with His people.**

- **God to Paul** We've already looked at the two previous times that God promised Paul he would go to Rome. God makes good on the promise even though the path to get there is filled with unexpected difficulty. At many points, it seems as though the promise would not be fulfilled. Yet, God was faithful and did exactly as He said

He would in bringing Paul to Rome. The circumstances and occasion were probably not what Paul had anticipated, yet there He was.

Additionally, I want us to see the continued promise that God makes to be with His people. (Acts 18:10) At Corinth “I will be with you...” This will be a recurring theme today. God to Paul... “I am with you.”

Moving on from Paul with the intent of overviewing the Scriptures, let’s start at the beginning...

- **God to Adam** (Gen 1:26-27). Of course God was with them in the garden walking in the garden (Gen 3:8). But here, God gives them a command to fill the earth and subdue it. Later in ch 3 having cursed the serpent, He gives the promise in 3:15 in what is called the proto euangeliaon or “first gospel” that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. God to Adam, “I am with you... and your seed...”
- **God to Noah** (Gen 9:9-17) Is the first use of the term “covenant.” It is used seven times in eight verses. What was the Noahic covenant? That God would save them from judgement and relent from deconstructing the world ever again with water. He called them into the ark to save them. Even though God’s presence in global judgement was being made known, to His people, He was salvation. God was with them. God to Noah.
- **God to Abraham** (Gen 12-17, esp 21:22). The Abrahamic covenant is one of the landmarks not only in the book of Genesis, but in the whole Bible. God continually refers back to it as a point of change whereby God called out a people. He reminds them of the descendants and land he swore to them. Ultimately, this would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, His church, and kingdom in the entirety of the world. God told Abram to leave his country and go to the place He would show him. He later gives him the promises and fulfills them partially during Abraham’s time but more thoroughly after Abraham was gone. There is a lesson there about trusting God for future generations and building accordingly. God was faithful to Abraham and gave Him a son. God was with Him. God to Abraham.
 - God to Isaac (Gen 26:3)
 - God to Jacob (Gen 28:15)
 - God to Joseph (Gen 39:2-3)By the time we get to Moses, the line of Abraham had increased from one man to at least two million people. God was restating and fulfilling the covenant.
- **God to Moses** (Ex 3:12-14, 20, 33:14; Dt 5). To Moses, God says to go to the people and tell them that “I Am” has sent you. Additionally, go to pharaoh and tell

him “let my people go.” God’s promise was that He would be with Moses. God to Moses.

- God to Joshua (Josh 1:5). As the predecessor to Moses, the man of God, it would have been easy for Joshua to live in Moses’ shadow. However, God called him to boldness in leadership taking people to the promised land. God told Joshua to not be afraid, to not shrink back or be intimidated. He was called to lead courageously and He did.
- God to Gideon (Judges 6:16). Gideon was considered a judge but a reluctant one. He was afraid and God reminded Gideon of His presence and called him to go to battle even though he was heavily outnumbered more than four to one.
- **God to David** (1Sam 16:18). David would extend the literal kingdom to new boundaries and have a son that would do so even more. Additionally, God promised David that he would always have an heir on the throne. This was also ultimately fulfilled in Jesus as the son of David.
- **I could go on and on all day reciting similar situations from Ruth to the prophets, to Ezra, Nehemia, Ester and Job.** This theme runs throughout the Scriptures. We’ve seen God to Paul, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David and now...
- **God to Us**
 - He sees and hears (12x, 11x, 4x). Sometimes it seems as though God is far off. His presence is not perceived by us and our hearts are prone to wander. The disconnect from our head and our hearts shows up in difficulties or trials. The lie of the enemy is always the same. He says, “God is not there. He doesn’t see you and your pain. He doesn’t hear your cries. If God is so good, why is He letting this happen to you?” The scriptures remind us no less than twenty-seven times that God does see, and hear, and care. Of course, He also promises not to leave us or forsake us. He will not turn away; He will not give up. Even if we are under His hand of judgement and difficulty, it is not the hand of an abusive father, but that of a loving one, drawing our affection away from anything that would compete with Him. He does that because He loves us. He is with us.
 - Never leave or forsake (Dt 31:6; Heb 13:5)
 - He will be with us, always... (Matt 28:20). Notice that God’s promise to be with us is couched in the missional activity of the kingdom. This promise is embedded in the command to disciple the nations. There is always a missional drive to God’s promise of presence. He is with us to take us

somewhere or have us do something. That was the case with Paul and all the others mentioned, and it is the case with us. God to us. God with us.

Conclusion:

God's covenants to His people are **patterns** and **promises** to us today. Every story in the Bible is a story about God's character and His interactions with mankind. As I read thought the Bible, I mark the occasions where that theology is made specific. I write a Greek theta beside the verse or verses that make the point of the story. Many times, there are extended narratives in a passage only to get to a verse like Genesis 50:20 where Joseph tells his brothers that what they meant for evil, God meant for good, for the salvation of many souls. They could not have possibly seen that truth at the time they were sinning but in hindsight God was doing something great.

God made a promise to Paul that He would go to Rome and indeed, he did. God fulfilled his promise. Jesus said in John 14:2-3 that He is preparing a place for us. He will bring us safely to the other side. He will also build His kingdom, and the gates of hell will not prevail (Matt. 16:18). His promise to His people is always with an eye towards making a name for Himself. He is making Himself known and building His church. This should bring us encouragement and fervor. It should embolden us and not being reticent to be counter cultural bringing the light into the darkness. Build a family. Build a church. Build Christian culture and nation that honors the Lord. Even though it seems inconspicuous, Luke is teaching us something about God. This passage today is such an occasion that warrants a theta marking reminding us that God does what He says He will do. Trust it. Build on it.

Application:

1. Study **covenant theology** and be encouraged. Deepen your faith through intense study and meditation on God's word and how it all fits together.
2. Be **thankful** and count your blessings. Thankfulness is the antidote to dissatisfaction. Even secular people have recognized this and have begun to recommend it. Bless the Lord daily for who He is and all the good things He has done.
3. Remember **the promises of God** and don't shrink back from danger. Build in this present evil age for God's sake. Don't hold back. Move forward remembering His presence.

God did what He had promised to Paul and the Kingdom of God moved forward. He promises to be our God, to be with us and conquer the nations through us. For Christ and His kingdom, for a thousand years! Yes and amen!

Closing Prayer:

Our God and our Father, we know You are with us. We know that Jesus is building His church. We know that His kingdom shall have no end. Help us to trust. Let us be filled with Your Spirit for the work at hand.

And now, as we take the Lord's supper, we indeed, we trust that the Lord Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many and we get to experience Your grace in this meal. Let us commune with You as we take the elements. Be with us and let us experience Your presence now at the table.

Thank you for the bread and the wine and for the Lord Jesus. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.