

Bible e-Study on the book of Acts (23:12-35)

Be careful what you promise!

“19 The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, “What is it you want to tell me?” 20 He said: “Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. 21 Don’t give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.” 22 The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”” [Acts 23:19-22](#)

NUGGET – This plot to kill Paul comes with some interesting details. We learn of some of Paul’s family connections. We also learn that the Roman commander seems to have both a fair degree of integrity as well as compassion.

When he tells the boy to not repeat what he has reported, it seems that he said so to protect this boy. That speaks well of the commander. But it's the plot and how he foils it that draws us in. By moving Paul at night and with so many troops, he makes it near impossible for the 40 men to complete their vow. In fact they did not succeed. So I’m left to wonder, did they die of thirst and hunger?

Remember that detail, that they had pledged a solemn vow to not eat or drink till they had killed Paul. And also notice that after taking this vow they told the chief priests and elders. So what became of them? How seriously did they take their vow? We don’t hear of 40 men in Jerusalem dying of thirst anywhere in scripture or outside of it for that matter.

I bring this up because it seems that when you pledge something solemnly it is matter of honor that you keep your word. As to whether or not these men died as result we aren’t told, however, it seems unlikely, as there is no follow-up to it. But the point for us is, how much do you stand by your word? When I worked in retail we learned to live by the axiom of “under-promise and over-deliver” when we could. That is I tried to train my people to not make a delivery time promise or anything of that nature that merely sounded good to the customer. It forced us to be honest and not create a poor customer service situation.

The thing for us a Christians however is that we have been bound to Christ and His promises. He *has* delivered on His promises. He has done as He said, He came and brought the kingdom of God to light, He was lifted up on the cross so as to draw all people to Himself and then He rose triumphant from the grave and ascended to heaven from where He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us. I’m not suggesting that we are able to do as Christ has. However Christ asks us to ‘go and sin no more’ and to ‘be holy as I am holy’. That is something that confronts us if we’re honest. Like the 40 men who promised to not eat or drink till they’d killed Paul we need to be mindful of our promises to follow Christ where He leads us.

APPLICATION -

1. How about our promises of faithfulness and holiness? What about when we’re confirmed and we promise to live according to gospel, how are we doing with that?

PRAY – Holy Father, I am weak and in need of Your strength and guidance. Please help me to ever focus my eyes on Christ lifted on the cross for my salvation, that I may learn to please You in how I act and in all I do. In Jesus name, Amen.