

What do you expect from God?

Do you expect answers? Fixes? Solutions? An Audible voice or a clear path? God *can* give you those things. But nowhere in the Bible does God *promise* that he will *always* give you those things. There's actually something different that you can have every day, and it might not be what you think.

Acts 24 finds Paul in custody, giving a defense of his faith, and proclaiming the hope that he has in Jesus.

It's helpful to remember that Paul's stated goal is to preach in Rome and beyond [19:21]—But for the rest of the book of Acts, he does not get to live that mission out as a free person. He's never again on his own power.

The Situation at Hand

Acts 24:10-15

"I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."

Acts 24:21

"It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today."

Here's the offensive Christian Doctrine that has landed Paul in this situation. It has nothing to do with gay rights, gun control, racism, immigration, separation of church and state or politically correct language.

It's the resurrection of the dead. It's the Christian's belief that when you die, something happens. And that means that what you do in this life matters. Specifically, whether or not you have faith in Jesus.

Acts 24:22-27

"When two years had passed, Felix...left Paul in prison"

Paul is in prison, but a free and unrestricted kind. However, he's just left there (The story doesn't resolve).

-- God may lead you somewhere you do not want to go. Or at the very least, he may leave you in a situation you would rather not be. --

This is not unique to the history in the Bible. There comes a time – sometimes several times – for every single one of us, when the extraordinary limitations of your own human power make themselves known. And you find yourself, for lack of a better term, *stuck*.

An Old Testament Comparison

Jeremiah 29:4-13

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

God does not promise freedom, does not promise easier life, does not promise justice, does not promise a timely solution, God promises...Himself. If you seek him, you will find him.

To believe in Jesus is to have two kinds of hope in seemingly hopeless situations:

Part 1 is that you have been redeemed and adopted by God the Father *through* the cross of Jesus Christ.

Part 2 is that God has not left you alone. He can be found and known. God does not offer a way out, he offers himself.

Further evidence that God can be found *in the midst* of difficult times are the accounts of Christians in jail in the book of Acts:

4:1-22

5:17-41

6:11-7:59

8:1-3

12:1-10

14:19 (attempted murder of Paul)

16:19-34

21- end of book

The strength of the Bible and therefore that of the Christian Faith and the Christian Church is its realness. The Bible describes things in a hauntingly real way.

The Christian Church is filled with people who deal with very real life situations.

The Christian Faith is not an abstract or hyper theoretical philosophy; it's a way of responding to very real things. Because we have hope, in Jesus.