

# FAITH

## THE PROMISES OF GOD

### 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

I'd like to begin reading in verse 15 of 2 Corinthians, chapter 1.

Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

And then verse 1 of the next chapter:

For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained?

The Apostle Paul is addressing an accusation that has come against him from the church at Corinth. He had communicated his plans to visit them. Now, Corinth was a difficult church for the Apostle Paul. If you are a parent and you have more than one child, you know that sometimes there is that one child that just takes a lot of extra work and attention. Corinth was that child for the Apostle Paul. He has been accused, now, because his travels plans changed, that his word is not reliable.

This is a little bit of a concerning accusation for a leader. You know, the idea: “Well, the pastor will tell you he’ll be there, but that doesn’t really mean anything. He won’t show up, or he’ll make an excuse. You can’t really count on his word.” My longtime friend, Joe Venci, used to be an elder here at the church for many years. He used to do what he called “a sternum check,” where he would come over with his knuckle and hit you right here. It wasn’t very pleasant, if you’re wondering. Joe used to have this saying he loved to quote from The Sermon on the Mount: “Let your yes be yes and your no be no.” If you tell Joe something, you’ve gotta let your yes be yes. It’s a good value, right? It’s good for us to keep our word. Paul is actually being accused of not keeping his word because he has had to make a change in his plans.

Now, this is what’s fascinating. I read the whole section to you because he begins by explaining his intent and what has happened, why he has changed his plans, and he ends with the same explanation. “I want to turn one visit into two visits. My plans changed. It was right for them to change. I actually wanted to delay my trip to you for your own good, because you were not in a good place. Had I come when I thought I would come, when I initially planned to be there, it would have been a painful visit for you. It would not have been as fruitful.”

So, I say by way of introduction that Paul doesn’t reject the accountability of his actions. But what’s fascinating is that the foundation of his response, the credibility for his leadership is not his explanation of what he did and why he did it. He actually drops into a teaching on the faithfulness of God. He basically says something like this. Let me give you this nugget as a way of summary before we unpack the teaching. His big idea is that God is faithful and that God is the one who establishes him as an apostle and as the leader in their lives. It’s this deeply embedded security where he says, “Listen, I’m the pastor of this church, not because I was elected, not because I’m super gifted, not because I wanted it, not because I campaigned for it, but because God almighty put me here. And because God put me here, I will be here until God removes me. So get used to it!”

Now, he says it a lot more pastorally. But can you get for a moment how reassuring that is? Listen, parent, mom, dad: God is in what you do. He has called you to be a parent. He will back you up. Understanding this is so powerful. Do you know who models this perfectly in scripture? Moses. Moses was a man who didn’t ask to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. He ran from Egypt. He never wanted to go back to Egypt. He was 80 years old when God found him hiding in the wilderness.

---

## Faith - The Promises of God

2 Corinthians 1:18-22 | Sunday, April 29, 2018 | By Brian Brookins



So God called him. He miraculously leads the people out of Israel – just a phenomenal example of a leader. Then there is this account in Numbers where Korah and some friends come to rebel against Moses. They said, “Moses, who are you? You’ve made yourself this big deal. You exalt yourself. You’re the one that hears from God. We should all hear from God. We should be in these positions.” Moses replied, “Listen, God did this; I didn’t do this. Why don’t we just let God decide? Let’s have a little test tonight; God will decide and tomorrow we will know.”

So tomorrow came, and this was God’s message: “Everyone move back from Korah’s tent, because I’m going to consume everyone near him!” The earth opened and swallowed him up. That’s security in leadership, right? That is a 120-year-old man who is mature in the Lord, who is like: “Listen, I am fine. Maybe God will say I’m done. Then I’ll go to South Florida and relax!” Knowing that God is the one who establishes you is the kind of confidence that Paul is exuding here. It helps us overcome the insecurities that we are prone to in our various roles in life.

Let’s look at the points. This is the big idea: God is faithful. Then in verses 18-22, he gives us an explanation of God’s faithfulness. As he does, he really teaches us how to bring the promises of God before him.

- I. Jesus is God’s eternal yes, verse 19.
- II. Jesus fulfills God’s promises, verse 20, and
- III. We live it out right now and experience it now by the Spirit, verses 21 and 22.

These are the three points. He introduces the idea that God is faithful in verse 18. Jesus is God’s eternal yes. Jesus fulfills God’s promises, and we live it out now by the Holy Spirit. Let’s look at the first point.

- I. Jesus is God’s eternal yes.

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you...was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes.” There are two ideas here that Paul is conveying to us. One is: Has God not demonstrated to you that he is for you in Jesus Christ? The Son of God became a man and served humanity by providing restoration, redemption, and reconciliation for us -- paying the price of

---

## Faith – The Promises of God

2 Corinthians 1:18-22 | Sunday, April 29, 2018 | By Brian Brookins



everything that separated us from God so that we can be right with God again. God has demonstrated his yes to us, so certainly we see God's favor towards us in that.

But the second idea is that this has always been God's plan. Jesus' sacrifice for our sin is revealed all the way back to the beginning of time. It is God's eternal plan for us. It's not an afterthought. It's not a parenthesis. It's not a course correction. God doesn't change his mind. Numbers 23:19: "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" God is faithful. God will keep his word. God always keeps his word. He has demonstrated to us once and for all his yes. So we begin with God by just coming to him in the disposition that in Christ I am accepted and in a place of acceptance before God.

Do you remember last week we looked at Romans 4? In Romans 5 Paul tells us about the benefits of salvation, literally the benefits of justification. You might be here saying, "Listen, all of this is new to me. I don't really have a relationship with God. How do I begin with God?" The scripture talks about beginning in a place of repenting from sin, admitting our sin against God, turning toward God and trusting in Christ and Christ's full payment for our sin. We receive salvation as a gift. It's all grace. It's a gift. We don't earn it. We just turn from going one way and we turn and put our trust in Jesus. Now, that act of God in our lives is called justification. It's a courtroom metaphor or scene where we are previously guilty before God. Jesus pays the penalty that we owe, and we are acquitted. We are made right with God. Our status with God is immediately changed.

Paul begins to list out those benefits. We receive them by faith. We do nothing to earn them. Jesus paid it for me. I believe it. I receive it. It's a gift. It's grace. Paul says that we now have a new standing with God. We have access into his presence. We stand in a place of favor. We stand in a place of grace. Our position with God is now where this eternal Yes is stamped over our lives. This is why we call it good news, because of what God has done for us and what we simply receive.

Then he continues. He says, "Not only that, we rejoice in our hope. We rejoice in our sufferings, because suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." You always remember those four things.

I told a little story about my wife and I being on vacation. There was a waitress that came up who had a tattoo in Greek on her neck. I was like, "Hmmm...what are those four words?" She gives me these four words from this passage in Romans 5: suffering, endurance, character, hope. Then I

asked her what the words were, but she didn't use the English Standard version. She had some weird translation of the Bible. I said, "Oh, what's that from?" She goes, "You're the pastor. You tell me." Then I told her. I said, "It's from Romans 5." It surprised us both, really.

But here's the point. When our little group had the chance to have this interchange with this young lady, it was clear that to her what that meant was: If you just don't give up, eventually you'll grow in character and hope will prevail. That's not what that passage says. That passage says that Jesus changes your status with God. Now, all of your circumstances are ordered a certain way so that you are displaying the hope of God even in the midst of affliction. You are growing. Then what follows those four words is: Just in case you have any doubt, the Spirit of God is in you, telling you over and over and over again one glorious truth: God loves you. God is your Father. You are a child of God.

You only experience that progression where you cannot be defeated in difficulty because of the Spirit of God in your life and your new status with God. All of that, Paul says, is because of justification. It's because you have a new standing with God because of God's eternal Yes to you in Jesus Christ.

### II. Jesus fulfills God's promises.

Verse 20: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." All of the promises that God has made, and there are just so many promises in scripture – Jesus fulfills them. Jesus meets all of the requirements. Jesus removes anything and everything that would keep that promise from being fulfilled in your life. So God's goodness to you, his promise to you is completely fulfilled in Jesus.

And more than that –this is one of the nuances of this verse -- God comes to you and says, "Look, I have promised you wholeness. I've promised you growth. I've promised you holiness. I've promised you purpose. I've promised you eternal life. I've promised you forgiveness. I've promised you reconciliation. All of this is yours. Jesus provides it for you. But when you're going to worship me, when you're going to add your Amen, when you're going to say 'Yes,' Jesus is there doing it for you, doing it in you, doing it through you."

---

## Faith – The Promises of God

2 Corinthians 1:18-22 | Sunday, April 29, 2018 | By Brian Brookins



So you come to this service and you are like, “I don’t know. I’m distracted. I’ve got things...I need to worship the Lord, but my mind’s not there. Oh God, help me. Help me, Lord, to focus on spiritual things.” And God says, “Jesus is there helping us at our Amen.” That’s what we’re doing when we spend time with God in prayer and in his word. We are learning to receive from God so that we have an Amen to give God.

That’s really good. I mean, I’m excited. Bertrhude, come up here and run back and forth and do your thing, would you? I don’t know about you, but I get up some mornings and I’m like, “I don’t know. I want to check the ballgame scores. I don’t want to pray. I want to complain! I want to sleep! God, help me.” Jesus is my Amen. He’s faithful. He’s helping us.

It’s just like your child wanting to buy you a birthday gift – with your money. Right? That’s what we do with God. I just wrote a check. Thank you. It came from you. Right? Really, if you have a generous father, why would you hold back on his birthday gift? Sorry, that’s a digression.

Okay, guys. I would like to belabor this, but I can’t. I’m going to illustrate it really quickly. You know my testimony if you’ve been here for any length of time. God did a miracle in our life, in our marriage, and God spoke to me personally from Isaiah 54. We were in a season where we wanted to have children, but we weren’t having children. There was a delay. We were having severe difficulty in our marriage. It really looked like we were not going to make it at one point. And God spoke of the barren woman in Isaiah 54 -- that she is fruitful, that she is more fruitful than the wife. What happened for me that was so powerful in this encounter with God is I tangibly felt my barrenness -- my lack of power to fix my marriage, to fix my life. I literally felt like life was caving in on me -- the church, the marriage, everything. And all I got in that moment, crying out to God, were promises from Isaiah 54.

I want to tell you, 25 years later, I’m still living on those promises. Now I’ve got six kids. I’ve got kids from America. I’ve got kids from Africa. I have an amazing wife. Right? I mean, last night, I’m doing a wedding. You know, you go to these weddings and you meet all kinds of new people. I’m introducing myself and I say, “This is my wife,” and people are like, “No, she’s not with you.” Yeah, man. Right?

Let’s move to the last point, because I’m not going to forget the third point today. I even put it up here before we started.

### III. We live it now by the Spirit.

This is where Paul goes. He says it is God who establishes us. Paul is saying: “Listen, you are accusing me of changing my plans. I have good reasons for what I do, but listen: Our eyes should be on God. God is faithful. God is establishing all of us together, and my relationship with you is ordained of the Lord. We’ve seen that demonstrated in Christ. All of the promises of God are ours. Let’s not get petty.”

This is just marvelous. He now says: “...it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” Here is what he says. This is very much like what he does in Romans 5. He says all these promises are ours, but just listen! If you’re thinking you have to wait till heaven to get it -- no! The Spirit of God is in you right now and you’re experiencing these promises here and now by the Holy Spirit. This is why we need this full-orbed robust doctrine and understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Do not get sidetracked by a certain gift or a certain view of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Just sweep all of that aside and embrace for now a full work of the Holy Spirit in your life, because this is how you experience the kingdom of God. He uses these three words: 1) anointing, 2) sealing, 3) guarantee.

- 1) Anointing is the word for Christ. Literally, he says that God has Christed us in Christ. He has anointed us in the Anointed One. The emphasis there is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Think of Jesus, first day of his ministry, Luke 4 in Nazareth. He stands up. He quotes the prophet Isaiah and he says: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

This is part of how God establishes you, as a single person, as a married person, as a mom, as a dad, as a pastor, as an employer, as a boss, as an employee – whatever it is. It’s the anointing of the Spirit of God. It’s the power of God resting on your life to bring the liberty of God in whatever role and capacity God has placed you. That’s a mouthful, but there is an agenda that God has to glorify himself in your life, and the power of God rests on you to do that. Alright?

- 2) The second word is seal. There is a wax seal of ownership, of identity, of authenticity. God puts his name on me. I am his.

- 3) There is a guarantee -- that's the third word that comes, and that guarantee is in my heart. I am experiencing an inner transformation by the work of the Holy Spirit. And so what happens is, we are bringing God's promises to him. We are saying, "Okay, Lord, they were given originally in this context."

Just work with me. This is a very important progression. I want you to see this quickly in our last couple of minutes. "You promised Joshua this. You promised Moses this. And this promise reveals this about you: You are faithful." Or: "You are powerful." Or: "You are wise and you give wisdom to those who need it. So I need that of you and from you, and I have it, because you have promised." The Holy Spirit is working in your heart to build your faith in the midst of your own brokenness, to experience his Yes by the Holy Spirit. Isn't that good? Isn't that powerful?

So, I was at this wedding last night, and I just forget to ask this question when I agree to do a wedding. It was outdoors, on a terrace, on the eighth floor, like a balcony. And I have this dreadful fear of heights -- really bad. So I get there and they tell me, "Okay, you're going to back up to the wall and stand there." I'm like, "No. No." The groom was 6' 2". He was this great, big, good-looking guy. He said, "Listen, if I hold your hand during the service..."

I tell you that because I can't explain to you why I can be in a building and I'm fine. I can be in an airplane and I'm fine, but if I'm on a rooftop or a terrace, I'm terrified. And what do I do for a living? I preach the fear-defeating gospel of Jesus Christ. Right? It just doesn't make sense. It's completely irrational. I come to Christ in my brokenness, saying, "Lord, you've given me this Son, and I delight in him. Then in a moment of anger I so grieve his Spirit, I'm going to keep him from you because of the brokenness in my life. Why can't I get past this?" God says, "Listen, I've got a way for you. I've said an eternal Yes to you, in your brokenness. I've told you in Isaiah 54, that Son will inhabit nations. I am the fruitfulness in you to produce what your soul is barren to produce without my promises. The Holy Spirit brings those promises to life, awakening faith in us. God is faithful.

Christian: Learn to reason with God. Learn to bring the promises of God before him, so that the character of God is revealed and awakened in your heart by the Holy Spirit so that you begin to experience it now. Last sentence: I understand and I give this to you, that we don't experience it perfectly until heaven. So we have more to look forward to. That's our hope. But we do experience it now by the Holy Spirit. Let's bow our heads.