

The promises of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev A.G.Ross

[0 : 00] And our text is in verse 20, verse 20, where Paul says, all the promises of God in him are ye, and in him are men, unto the glory of God by us.

Now in order to get the connection, I want to read from verse 15, and to read in the NIV, which makes it clearer. From verse 15, because I was confident of this, says Paul, I plan to visit you first, so that you might benefit twice.

I plan to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then have you send me on my way to Judea.

When I plan this, did I do it lightly, or do I make my plans in a worldly manner, so that in the same breath I say yes, yes, and no, no?

But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me, and Silas, and Timothy, was not yes and no, but in him it was always yes.

[1 : 09] For no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ. And so through him the Amen is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Verse 20, for no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ. And so through him the Amen is spoken by us to the glory of God.

And in the better known person, it is for all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him Amen, and to the glory of God by us.

2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 20. Now, unjust criticism is hard to bear at any time.

And it's even more so when our critics do not know all the facts, and indeed couldn't possibly know all the facts. But when even that does not deter them or curb them from being critical, it makes it all the harder to take.

[2 : 20] Now that was precisely Paul's position at the time of writing here. Paul had promised to visit the Corinthian church, the Corinthian believers, on the way to Macedonia, and again on the way back.

So they expected him, and they looked forward to his coming and to receiving a double blessing. Verses 15 and 16 explain that.

But for good and proper reasons, this plan did not materialize. The arrangements had to be cancelled on that occasion. And believe it or not, from the passage before us here, it appears that the Corinthian church took that cancellation on the nose.

And they felt let down by the Apostle Paul. And so they accused him of lightness or fickleness.

They accused him of being unreliable. That he was a yes and no man. That he could blow hot and cold. Now that kind of thing is hard to take when it's not true.

[3 : 38] And it wasn't really true of the Apostle Paul at all. And it seems also from the account here, if we are understanding correctly, that the Corinthian believers argued that if Paul could not be depended upon as a man, neither could he be depended upon as a preacher.

So again, he had to defend himself, as he does in verse 18, by saying that his preaching, or his word, his preaching was not yes and no, but yes.

In other words, his preaching wasn't uncertain or unreliable at all, but was as sure as God is sure.

Verse 18. And his preaching was as sure as the Lord Jesus Christ himself was sure. In verse 19.

And then at verse 20.

He moves away from himself and his defense of himself to concentrate on God. And on God's integrity and trustworthiness.

[4 : 50] So here we have in verse 20. This little gem of a verse that exalts the Lord and exalts the sure word of his promises.

Paul says, For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him amen, and to the glory of God by us. Now we notice first of all, the promises of which we are reminded.

And they are, and it's spoken up in this way, they are spoken up in this way, all the promises of God. For all the promises of God.

Now these five words tell us two things about the promises, which we find in scripture from Genesis to Revelation. And the first thing is this, their quality.

They are of God. They are from God. They have been given by him. They take their rise in him. So the quality of the promises is divine.

[5 : 55] Now divine promises are God's spoken and written undertakings to do certain things for us. Or as it's put more theologically by John Calvin, God's promises are the declarations of the purposes of his grace towards the elect.

But put even better by Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, he says, the purposes, the purposes of God are his concealed promises.

And his promises are his revealed purposes. God's promises are his revealed purposes.

Now, these revealed purposes, called in scripture promises, we now have. Now, Paul says that in chapter 7 and verse 1 of this same letter.

He says, having, beloved, having these promises, let us purify everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

[7 : 06] Paul says, we have the promises. And Peter says the same thing. Peter says, there are given to us exceeding great and precious promises.

So, Paul says, the promises are of God. And I want us to look for a moment now at what Peter says about the promises that Paul says are of God.

Peter says, first of all, they are exceedingly great. That's in 2 Peter 1.4. They are exceedingly great. Great, for example, in importance.

The promises of God are important. Whatever God says to us is important. And that means that God never deals in trivialities. Now, what a lesson that is for us.

Because we are plagued by the trivial. And instead of being plagued by the trivial, let us be enriched by the important. And by the importance of the exceedingly great promises which we have been given by God.

[8 : 16] For God's promises express his will for us. And his desires toward us. And his intentions concerning us. And in the promises, God has our present and our eternal good at the very forefront.

So his promises are quality promises. And are invested with superlative importance. They are exceedingly great.

And Peter also says that they are exceedingly precious. Exceedingly precious and valuable. And their importance is so great that the promises of God are like nuggets of gold.

The promises of God are, as it were, on the gold standard for value and for preciousness. And so valuable and gold-like are the promises of God that Peter goes on in that fourth verse of the first chapter of his second letter.

And he says that by the promises of God we are made partakers of the divine nature. That is, the promises of God are the instrument of our new birth.

[9 : 38] They are the instrument of our being made a new creation in Christ Jesus. How is that? In this way, that when we lay hold by faith upon the promises, then we are laying hold upon the blessings that the promises promised.

And are therefore born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God which lives and abides forever. Are the promises of God therefore not quality promises?

they give us new life, they put new hope into us, they give us fresh comfort, they give us daily strength for the tasks and burdens of life.

That means therefore that we are never to look on the promises as some people do look on them, we are never to look on the promises of God as icing on the cake or jam on the bread.

That is to have a wrong view of the promises and their importance and their preciousness. If they are responsible for putting new life within us and that by them we are made partakers of the divine nature, they are far more than icing on the cake.

[10 : 54] They are the very staff of life. For what God covenants to do for us, he will do. And what he covenants to do for us is what he in his wisdom knows we need so much.

And he presents his blessings to us in covenant form in the form of promises which are exceeding great and precious and their quality is the gold standard they are of God himself, from God himself. Let us then render thanks unto the Lord and give praise and thanks to the Lord for wonders he has done. He has given us those wonderful promises marked, first of all, by their quality.

And the second thing about the promises we have in verse 20 is that they are marked too by their quantity. All the promises or as many promises as God has made are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us.

As many promises as God has made from Genesis to Revelation, their quantity is referred to in verse 20. Now, although we said that the promises of God are like gold, yet they do not have to be feverishly searched for as gold.

[12:26] We are not to become like Klondike gold diggers desperately looking for nuggets of gold that may no longer be there. rather, the promises of God are exceedingly great in number and they are found all over Scripture.

They don't have to be dug up from some obscure part of Scripture, one or two promises. They're spread all over Scripture. All the promises of God, the promises, as many of them as God has made, are there in Scripture.

And they come to us in a great variety of forms. Some are general, others are particular. Some are for the church as a whole, others are for individuals.

Some are conditional, others are unconditional. What a variety. And the all of the promises is so wide and embracing that there is a promise for all kinds and conditions of people and even for the chief of sinners.

When the Lord Jesus says whosoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out, is that not a most gracious promise of salvation?

[13:49] And other promises like it. What is John 3.16? That an exceeding great and precious promise to those, whoever they are, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The promise is they shall never perish. the promise is no one shall pluck them out of my hand. May we be then of those who believe God as Abraham did and who believe the promises of God and not just one here and there but who believe all the promises of God which are yes and amen and to the glory of God by us.

That's the first thing then. The promises of which we are reminded. Now the second thing is the certainty with which they are invested.

And this is the main purpose of Paul here in this particular verse and in the verses before this verse to testify to the integrity and trustworthiness reliability and certainty of the promises of scripture.

Now the promises of scripture are sure but they are not only sure the first thing I want to say is this that they are doubly sure they are doubly sure we already noticed that they are from God they have been given to us by God but in addition to that we note carefully that they are of God in him for all the promises of God in him in the Lord Jesus Christ are yes and in the Lord Jesus Christ amen unto the glory of God by us.

[15:45] They are in him they are not not only given to us by God the Father they are fulfilled in Christ the Son so they are doubly sure now will you notice what is said about the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 19 the Lord Jesus Christ is not as Paul was accused of being the Lord Jesus Christ is not yes and no he is not a yes and no person a person of variable of variable quantity but one of stable quantity he is yes and yes alone in other words the Lord Jesus is not is not changeable but changeless the Lord Jesus in his person is semper idem always the same the same yesterday today and forever all may change but Jesus never he is not yes and no he is yes changeless and unchangeable well now what does that fact about the person of the

Lord Jesus the character of Jesus what does that fact say about the promises of God it says this because the promises of God are in him who is not yes and no then in him they receive their yes their affirmation the certainty and changelessness and reliability of the promises are further confirmed because they are not only from God the Father they are in Christ the Son and because they are in him their certainty is made doubly sure well it's good to know that they come to us from God that in itself would satisfy us but Paul goes further they come to us from God and their fulfillment is in him who is not yes and no and therefore neither of the promises yes and no they are yes they are sure and certain and reliable and trustworthy that's the first thing they are doubly sure but now the second the second thing is this by implication they are doubly sure the promises are doubly sure for not only are they from

God the Father in Christ the Son but they are sure also because of the Holy Spirit how come because there's nothing said about the Holy Spirit here well the promises of God are in the Old Testament and in the New Testament through the medium of the writers of Scripture but these writers these human writers were not loners they weren't on their own these human writers of Scripture were the pen men of the Holy Spirit and what they spoke and what they wrote it was because they were moved by God the Holy Spirit and it's because the promises are part of the Word of God which was inspired by the Spirit of God that they have this additional authority they have come from God they are in the Lord Jesus and they have been inspired by the Holy Spirit who has inspired all Scripture so the promises of God are the product of the Holy Trinity how then can they be yes and no how could Paul's preaching of the promises be yes and no how could they be how could anything be yes and no which had divine affirmations and the promises and the promises are from God in Christ inspired by the Holy Spirit they are affirmatives of the mind and will of God and not negatives they are not against the truth they are for the truth they are affirmatives and they were so for the prophets and the apostles affirmative absolutely sure and certain and unless we claim to have more understanding and insight and light than the apostles then the promises are sure and certain for us they are authoritative and reliable and sure and steadfast may this therefore encourage us to rest ourselves upon God's promises consciously and trustingly may this encourage us to stand on God's promises as a sure and tried foundation of rock and not of sand for all the promises that God has made from Genesis to Revelation all the promises of

God are in him in the Lord himself yes and in him amen to the glory of God by us that's the second thing we notice the promises of which we are reminded and then the certainty with which they are invested and now finally we notice the response to which they are entitled the response to which they are entitled for we read here in our text that the promises are not only in Christ yes but they are also amen to the glory of God by us the promises are amen now the word amen does not add anything new to the situation here the word amen simply emphasizes the yes of certainty for the amen just means yes or yes indeed so let it be so there's a further emphasis given here the promises of God are yes in Christ and they're also yes again in Christ so let it be and here again we can say that the promises take after him who guarantees their fulfillment for the

[22 : 39] Lord Jesus Christ we notice when we're thinking of the letter of Jesus to the Laodicean church the Lord Jesus Christ is the amen the faithful and true witness he's the one who says I am the way the truth and the life and in the Lord Jesus the promises are amen they are sure and certain in him who is the amen the faithful and true witness but what we have to notice here is this that the amen is not spoken by the Lord Jesus the amen is spoken says Paul by us by us the amen is spoken by us to the glory of God in other words it's the beneficiaries it's the beneficiaries of the promises who say amen yes indeed so let it be now that's the response to which the promises are entitled because of their quality and their quantity and their certainty they are entitled to this response from us first of all from the apostles by us refers to the apostles first of all but also to all believers the the the the the promises are entitled to a human response a human amen that is to be to the glory of God that's the response to which they are entitled now there is one danger however of which we need to be aware and it's this that our amens can be hollow and mechanical and so often come from our lips and not from our hearts and if therefore we are to say amen to the promises of God for the glory of

God then the amen must come not just from our lips but from our hearts and that being so two things are required of us regarding the promises if our amen is to be to the glory of God and the first is this there must be our cordial acceptance of the promises otherwise otherwise any amen we have we may say is hollow there must be first of all a cordial acceptance of the promises now how eminently practical this is and how plain too for example when God says I will never leave you nor forsake you it's not for us to query this or to question it or as it were to take it with a pinch of salt it's not for us to put restrictions on God's on this promise or to have reservations about this promise such a response brings no honour to God and does little credit to us in view of what this verse says in fact to respond in any way to this promise of

God then with cordial acceptance will cause the blessings of the promise to tarry so that we become our own worst enemy by not giving the promise a cordial welcome and acceptance and for any of God's promises to be a blessing to us we must cordially receive them to ourselves again when the Lord Jesus says whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life what

possible excuse can anyone have for doubting the truth of that promise in view of the passage before us here and what excuse can anyone have for doubting the paramount necessity for such a promise for if we doubt a promise like that whoever believes on me shall not perish then we remain in our state of condemnation but if we accept the promise and act on the promise and believe the one who makes the promise then we are set free from that state for there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in

Christ Jesus the Amen the true and faithful witness in whom the promises find their veracity well may the truth of God's promises and the purposes for which they have been given move us to say Amen to say Lord I believe help my unbelief may the truthfulness of God's promises move us to be like Abraham who staggered not at the promise but was strong in faith giving glory to God for to believe the promises and to give to the promises cordial acceptance is to benefit ourselves and above all to bring glory to God that's the first thing if our Amen is not to be hollow and is to be to the glory of God it means that we must give cordial acceptance to the promises the second thing is this that we must give to the that we must there must be an earnest pleading of the promises a cordial acceptance of them and then an earnest pleading of the promises now what does it mean to plead the promises of

God what does that mean well I believe it it means this it means that we say to God what David said to God on the occasion of which we read in 1 chronicles chapter 17 and verse 23 David said to God let the promise you have made concerning your servant and your servant's house be established forever and do as you have said that's to plead the promise do as you have said and when we plead the promise we are pleading with God that the promise might be fulfilled and when we plead the promise we are as it were taking a check out of the check book of the bank of faith and are presenting that check to the divine banker asking him to give us the bearers what is promised on the check we are saying to our divine banker do as thou hast said and give as you have promised and such pleading again glorifies

[29 : 55] God and benefits us and if we plead that then our amen will be more likely to be to the glory of God by us icing on the cake far from it the promises are the very life of the soul the promises is food are food and drink to the soul so let us feed on them for our spiritual nourishment let us also rest upon them for our inward comfort and also let us stand on them for our present and eternal security make the promises our own by faith in the Lord Jesus remembering all the time that we lay hold upon the promises remembering all the time that he is faithful who has promised and the promises that come from a faithful reliable trustworthy

God are promises that are invested with the same trustworthiness and reliability they are not yes and no they are yes in Christ Jesus and may we be able to say to them amen to the glory of God by giving them a cordial reception and pleading them and saying to the Lord do as thou hast said let us pray O Lord our God may we not pass over thy promises lightly thou hast not given them to us lightly they are not like icing they are the staff of our spiritual life and we pray that we would know how to use them for our own benefit and strengthening and restfulness and also for thy glory and above all for thy glory help us

Lord to say amen the amen is by us to the glory of God Lord deliver us not only from trivialities but deliver us from hollowness in our responsiveness to thee as we think of the response that the promises deserve and to which they are entitled may our amen may our soul let it be come from hearts that have benefited from their quality and quantity and certainty draw near to us oh Lord we pray and help us to put these promises under us as a strong and a tried foundation for faithful is the Lord who promised how we bless thee for thy faithfulness how we give thanks to thee for every evidence we have of thy faithfulness and as we've been thinking oh

Lord today of thy faithfulness with regard to thy promises make them exceedingly precious to our own hearts and lives through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen