

Promises You Can Bank On

2 Corinthians 1:20-22

One of the great proofs of the inspiration of our Bible is the fulfilled predictions. The Bible is unique in all of the books of religion on the earth in that it is the only book which makes predictions. It is very dangerous to do that because if you make a prediction and it comes to pass, that's one thing; but if you make a prediction and it doesn't come to pass, then that's another thing.

There are hundreds and hundreds of predictions made in the Old Testament. Many of those predictions have already been fulfilled. Many of those predictions center around the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are over 300 predictions in the Old Testament about the first and the second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ, predictions made ahead of time concerning some detail revolving around the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These predictions are also promises. They are sure and certain, and we can build our life on the promises of God.

Do you remember the childhood toy called a magic 8 ball? You could ask it a yes-or-no question and shake it up to get the answer. There was never anything spooky or supernatural about it - it was just a silly toy. In fact, President Eisenhower kept one on his desk in the Oval Office as a joke! Inside a magic eight ball is a 20-sided shape called an icosahedron. On each of these 20 sides a different answer is printed. Even Toyco and later Mattel knew that people most want to hear "yes" because of the 20 possible answers, 10 were yes, only 5 were no, and 5 were ask again or possibly. Whenever you shook it up, you had a 75% chance of getting "yes" or "possibly."

One of the most beautiful words in the human language is the word "yes." Whenever a young man summons enough courage to ask a young lady to be his bride, there is only one word he wants hear: "Yes!" When you apply for a job, you want to hear, "Yes, you're hired." When you apply for a home mortgage, you want to hear, "Yes, you've been approved."

We can remember as a kid in school having our first crush. We wrote their name on a note that said, "I like you. Do you like me? Check yes or no."

From the time we were children we've learned to cringe when we heard the word, "No." When you were little and started to do something wrong, your mom or dad would shout, "No!" When you got a little older and wanted to go somewhere with your friends, but your parents said, "No, and that's final!"

Sadly, many people conceive of God in the same negative terms. To them, God is a cosmic killjoy who watches from heaven just waiting to catch them doing something wrong. They imagine Him shaking His finger at people saying, "No! No! Bad person, stop that right now!" But the God of the Bible isn't trying to spoil your fun by constantly telling you, "No!"

God loves you, and He wants you to enjoy life to the fullest. I believe that God's favorite word is, "Yes." He loves to answer the prayers of his children. Our struggle is when He seems to not hear us or answer our prayers.

What do you do when PROMISES go UNFULFILLED?

Everyone, at some point or another, has been the recipient of a promise. It may have been a little promise or a big promise. It may have been an average promise or an extraordinary promise. Some people are still emotionally hurt because of promises broken a long time ago. Somebody who made a promise did not follow through.

What do I do when I profess faith in a God who is a HEALER, yet I go to the doctor and get diagnosed with illness and sickness and bad news?

What do I do when I profess faith in a God who is a PROVIDER, yet I'm living paycheck to paycheck and sometimes wonder how I'm going to make ends meet?

What do I do when I profess faith in a God who is a RECONCILER, yet I'm living with a person who feels DISTANT and fills me with hurt, bitterness, confusion?

The solution is, I don't allow my experiences in life to shape what I believe about God. I believe God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In Hebrews 11:13, the people of God experienced this, *"All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth."*

These people are part of the hall of faith chapter. These great people DIED still believing in faith that God would come through on His promises. They lived with FAITH, and they DIED with faith. They NEVER stopped believing.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul had made some plans that he couldn't keep. We should be careful not to make promises we can't keep. As much as we try to keep promises, sometimes our "yes" becomes a "no." And all of us have heard promises that were broken. When you hear a person say, "I promise," take it with a grain of salt. In this life you'll hear empty promises like: "This will only take a moment of your time." "I'm not trying to sell you anything." "This won't hurt a bit." or "If I'm elected, I will..." As much as we like to keep our promises, sometimes we fail. But all of God's promises are in Christ, and they are rock solid. He says, "Yes! I love you unconditionally - I promise in Christ. Yes! I can forgive all your sins - I promise in Christ. Yes! I have a wonderful plan for your life - I promise in Christ!"

Paul is midway through a tactful explanation aimed at preventing misunderstanding among the Corinthians explaining his exuberance in ministry. He is plodding along, putting his verbs and nouns in proper order; then suddenly one word quickens the pace, the word "Yes."

"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." 2 Corinthians 1:19

"Yes" is God's favorite and most repeated word. It is spoken mostly in its Hebrew form, "Amen." The Hebrews said "Amen" where we would say "yes." The richness of the word can only be understood in relation to God. The church knows God as the One who says yes to us, who establishes us, and makes us firm and secure.

"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. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

- **Jesus is the SUBSTANCE of all God's promises.**

"In him ALL the promises of God are YES and AMEN." 2 Corinthians 1:20

"Jesus is the sum and substance of all of God's promises because He is both the fulfiller and the fulfillment." - Jack Hayford

“Amen” is a statement of confidence in God. When we hear the truth of God's word declared, and we agree with it, we can say “Amen” with bold assurance knowing that the Word won't change. When we pray, we can conclude with a firm “Amen” because we are confident our prayer has been heard, our God is at work, and the best response to our petition is already in the making.

God says yes to you. He doesn't divide you up into two parts, the acceptable and the unacceptable. He doesn't say yes to your soul and no to your body. He doesn't say yes to your good moods and no to your bad moods. He doesn't say yes to your sunshine and no to your rain. He doesn't say yes to you on Sunday and no to you on Monday. In Him, it's always yes because He made you, and He likes what he made. He loves you, and He enjoys what He loves. He saves you and never gives up in discouragement as He works with you to restore you to wholeness in Christ.

“Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus. Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both “Yes, yes” and “No, no?” 2 Corinthians 1:12-17

“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.” 2 Corinthians 1:20

Herbert Lockyer wrote a book entitled, All the Promises in the Bible. He counted there are 7,457 promises of God found in the Bible! Jesus is the “yes” to every single promise of God. That's 7,457 times the Bible says, “Yes!” Because Jesus is the “YES!” to every promise of God, we respond by saying “Amen” to the glory of God.

The word “Amen” means, “so be it” or “right on!” Of all the words in the human language, there are two words that are the same in every language: “Hallelujah” (which means “Praise the Lord”) and “Amen.”

“Amen” is so great a word that it is used for other purposes than ending a prayer. In 1958 Arnold Palmer was on his way to winning the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, Georgia. After Sunday's final round, sportswriter Herbert Warren Wind wrote an article for Sports Illustrated in which he remarked on how well Palmer had played the difficult three holes 11, 12, and 13. In the article, Wind first called that part of the course the “Amen Corner.” That name stuck and since that day, that section of Augusta National has become famous as the “Amen Corner.”

The actual term “Amen Corner” goes all the way back to England. There is an “Amen Corner” outside St. Paul's Cathedral where people gather to pray. There was a corner in New York City at 5th Avenue and Madison Gardens where street preachers and other speakers would gather to shout their message. If listeners agreed, they would shout, “Amen!” That's how that location became known as “Amen Corner.”

Jesus is the “yes” but, we're the ones who say, “Amen!” Every time I say, “Yes,” you say, “Amen.”

- **Jesus is ENOUGH.**

Let's ask God five questions, and then listen for His favorite word.

- 1. God, Do You Really Love Me?
God's Answer Is: YES! Amen!**

One of the first songs we learned in Sunday School said, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

If you need proof that God loves you, just look at the cross. The night before Jesus was crucified He said,

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

God loves you so much that if you had been the only person needing a Savior, Jesus would have gone to the cross to die for you. God’s love for you is unconditional. He doesn’t love you IF you act a certain way, He loves you with a complete love based on His loving character rather than on anything you’ve done. God doesn’t love you because you deserve it.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” Jeremiah 31:3

God loves you because it’s His nature to love you.

2. God, Can You Forgive All My Sins?

God’s Answer Is: YES! Amen!

Each of us stands guilty before a Holy God, but instead of judging us on the basis of our sins, God, who is rich in mercy and full of grace, offers us a full and free pardon. The proof of God’s forgiveness is seen at the cross. It is through the death of Jesus on the cross that the guilt of our sin is removed.

“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin.” 1 John 1:7

The prophet Micah wrote about the promise of God to forgive, *“You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”* Micah 7:19

We can rejoice because God has buried all our sins in the ocean depths of His grace and forgiveness.

3. God, Do You Have A Plan For My Life?

God’s Answer Is: YES! Amen!

God has a plan for you. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read, *“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 has bigger dreams for our lives than any of us can have for ourselves. God wants the very best for you in this life and in the life to come. You may be thinking that your life is a mess, and it seems that God’s plan for your life isn’t working out very well right now. All I can say is that He isn’t finished yet. Not everything that happens in life is good, but Romans 8:28 promises that if you love God and are one of His called ones, that He will work everything out for good. *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

If I offered you a cup of dry flour to eat, you’d say, “No thanks.” If I offered you a couple of raw eggs, or a cup of sugar, or a cup of melted butter, you’d probably refuse them. But a knowledgeable cook can take this same group of unappetizing ingredients, mix them together, put them in a pan, pop them in an oven and soon there will be cake. God’s plan for you is a lot like that. There are often some terrible, unappetizing things. But God can take the good, the bad, and the ugly and mix them up in the bowl of His blessedness, stir them up in the pan of His providence, and then pop them into the oven of His omnipotence and make something great.

The Bible says, *“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”* Psalm 34:8. Does God have a good plan for your life? Yes! Amen!

4. Jesus, Are You With Me? God's Answer Is: YES! Amen!

"I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:20

God surrounds us. He is everywhere: above, below, on all sides. Today we lay claim to the nearness of God. He says in Hebrews 13:5, "*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*" Grip this promise like the parachute it is. Repeat it over and over until it overrides the voices of fear. The Lord God is with you, and He is mighty to save. Cling to His character. He is sovereign. You will get you through what you are going through.

Although fear fills our world, it doesn't have to fill our hearts. No one likes living in a world filled with fear and uncertainty, but God does some of His most important work during challenging times.

There are over 200 powerful Bible verses encouraging us to fear not because God is with us... If you are afraid of failure, If you are afraid of the unknown, If you are afraid of financial difficulties, If you are afraid of people, If you are afraid of death, If you are afraid for the welfare of a loved one, Dealing with fear caused by anxiety and grief, Needing a gift of encouragement to lift their spirits and recreate joy, Needing a boost of confidence to live boldly.

Jesus understands us. He's faced hunger, sorrow, and death and wants to face them with you. The Hebrews writer says Jesus "*understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.*" Hebrews 4:15

Jesus was God in human form. He was God with us. That is why Jesus is called Immanuel. "Immanu" means "with us." "El" refers to Elohim, or God. So Immanuel is not an "above-us God." He came as the "with-us God." All of us.

Jesus told His disciples who were caught in a storm, "*Don't be afraid... Take courage. I am here!*" Matthew 14:27

To hear the words "I am here" changes everything. That's why God repeats the "I am here" pledge so often.

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." John 10:28

We cannot go anywhere that God is not there. Look over your shoulder; that's God following you. Look into the storm, that's Christ coming toward you.

5. Jesus, Are You Coming Back? God's Answer Is: YES! Amen!

In the last verse of the last page of the last book of the Bible Jesus says, "*He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'*" Revelation 22:20

Our response: "*Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.*" Revelation 22:20

There is a remarkable unity to the entire Bible that never ceases to amaze me. This is the last time that God says, "Yes." The first time God is recording saying "Yes" is in Genesis. He had promised Abraham years earlier that Sarah would bear him a son, and when God mentioned it again, Abraham literally fell down laughing. That's when God first uttered His favorite word. He said in Genesis 17:19, "*Yes, your wife, Sarah, will bear you a son, and you will name him laughter (Isaac).*"

Some commentators say God got the last laugh on that! Some people today scoff at the very idea of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Once again, God will have the last laugh. The last recorded words of Jesus in the Bible are these, “*YES! I AM coming soon!*” All of us who know Him, and love Him, and love His appearing, we say “Amen!”

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.” The Bible ends with Amen! Like a punctuation mark.

- **God Wants You To Say “Yes” To Him!**

One of the reasons why “yes” is God’s favorite word is because He loves to hear us say that same word to Him.

On April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School fourteen students and one teacher died. One of the students shot was a 17-year-old girl named Cassie Bernall. Before becoming a Christian two years earlier, Cassie had been a Goth girl preferring to wear black and dabbled in the occult. Even after she became a Christian, she still tried to befriend and influence her Goth friends. She had long blonde hair, and just days before the attack she had told her aunt she was going to cut her hair short and donate it to “wigs for kids” a program that made wigs for kids who had undergone chemo. Although she was known as quiet, she had a radiant smile, and everyone knew that her favorite movie was Braveheart. When she faced death, Cassie demonstrated amazing bravery. According to some friends who were in the library on that terrible Tuesday afternoon, one of the gunmen pointed a gun at Cassie and asked, “Do you believe in God?” Cassie was terrified, but she said, “Yes.” Those were her last words, but in same moment the gunman pulled the trigger, Cassie was ushered into eternity.

Her mother, Misty Bernall, wrote a best-selling book entitled, “She Said Yes: The Unlikely martyrdom of Cassie Bernall.” Cassie’s last word, “yes” has touched thousands of lives. She has inspired many people to say “yes” to God’s call.

Think about how God used people in the Bible who said “yes” to Him. Noah said “Yes” to build a boat because God told him it was going to rain (Genesis 6:14-22) and it had never rained a drop on earth before then! Abraham said, “Yes” to God’s call to leave Ur and head west without a destination in mind. (Genesis 12:1-4) Then he said, “Yes” when God told him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. (Genesis 22:1-19) Moses said “yes” at the burning bush to a God who is the great I Am. (Exodus 3) When the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her she had been chosen by God to give birth to the Son of God, she humbly said, “*Yes, Lord, let it be as You have said.*” (Luke 1:38) And when Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” He said, “Yes, Lord.” (John 21:17)

When He calls us to salvation, He wants us to say, “Yes, Lord, I will trust You.” When He calls you to discipleship, He wants to hear you say, “Yes, Lord, I will follow You.” When God calls you for service He wants to hear you say, “Yes, Lord, I will serve You!” And when we say, “Yes!” to God’s call, I think He says, “Amen!”

What is God calling you to do today? Is He calling you to attempt something so great that without His power it is doomed to failure? Don’t be afraid, just say, “Yes, Lord!” His favorite word is: YES! Amen!