

Jesus Christ - God's 'Yes'
II Corinthians 1:12-20

When you have a critic, he will scrutinize every part of your life. He will make something big out of the smallest incident. This happened to Paul in his relationship with the Corinthian Church. When he did not come to Corinth for a visit as he had promised, his critics began to use it. They accused him of being insincere in his motives and of being fickle in his promises. They contended that this indicated a real flaw in his character. His "yes" might mean a "yes," or it might mean "no." You could never know for sure.

How would you respond to such a critic? We can be grateful that Paul did not choose to ignore them. Rather he responded with an affirmation of his own character, but more importantly a reminder of the character of God. Since he was a servant of God, it should follow that he would be seeking to reflect the character of God in his own affairs. It is what he has to say about God and about the relationship of Jesus our Lord to the promises of God that should be most helpful to us. He asserts that Jesus Christ is God' "yes" to which we should respond with a confident "Amen."

There are three important truths here for our consideration.

I. AS GOD'S "YES," JESUS IS THE CONFIRMATION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

God made his first promise to man in the Garden of Eden. To the guilty pair, he promised that a Seed of Woman would come to bruise the head of the serpent. From that point forward, God continued to make promises. He made promises to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, to Joseph, to Moses, to Israel, to David, through the prophets, and on and on. Yet with the passing of the years, most of those promises centered upon a Messiah, a Deliverer who would come to deliver His people. But he never came. Generations came and generations died, but no fulfillment of the promises. What did this mean? Did this mean that God was fickle? Did this mean that God's attitude had changed and that he no longer wanted to send a Deliverer. Such questions could have been raised about the character of God. Just what kind of God is He.

But In the fullness of time, God did keep the promises. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, Silas and Timothy, was no yea and nay, but in Him was yea." His coming is seen by Paul as being a confirmation of the character of God. It reveals God as being truthful and faithful. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was God keeping His Word to His people. This is a rather bold affirmation of Jesus as the unique Son of God.

This is an important point. A test of a man's character is how far he will go in attempting to keep his word. Will he keep his promise when it is no longer to his

advantage to keep his promise? What kind of price is he willing to pay to keep his promise? The experience of Jesus is a revelation of just how far God is ready to go in order to keep His promise. He was ready to give His only Begotten Son in order to keep His promise to mankind. Even though it cost the very life of His son, he kept His word. There can never be any doubt about God's character. Jesus is the revelation of the trustworthiness and Faithfulness of our God.

It may seem to us at times that God is not faithful to His word. He has been rashly accused by more than one pilgrim of being unfaithful. But when he seems to be unfaithful, we must remember what happened in the coming of Jesus. Just when it looked like God had forgotten, he then acted. The Cross stands in the midst of history as an everlasting reminder of the faithfulness of God. He has confirmed His character once and for all time.

II. AS GOD'S "YES," JESUS CHRIST IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISES OF GOD

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ." Have you ever tried to count the promises in the Bible? I believe that I have read somewhere that there are more than three thousand promises in the Bible. They would not cover three thousand different situations, but there would be three thousand specific individual promises. Paul was fully aware of their number and their breadth, yet he affirms that "no matter how many" there are, they are "Yes" in Christ. What does this mean?

Maybe we should clarify what a "promise" is. A promise is what is freely offered. It is not what one consents to after negotiation or appeal. Rather in a promise of God, God takes the initiative. Out of the love and generosity of His own being, He extends, an offer. His promises are designed to meet the specific needs that He perceives in the life of man. As a God of wisdom, He has given a promise to match every real need that may occur in the life of man.

In our text, Paul is affirming that Jesus Christ is God's "Yes" to each of these promises. He is saying that whatever God has promised, He has made it available to us in Christ Jesus. Since God often promised full pardon for sin, God has made this pardon available to sinful man in Christ Jesus. Those who come to God through Him can know that their sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west.

Since God has promised righteousness to those who come to Him in faith, He has made this righteousness available to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is made unto us as righteousness. He is the "yes" of God to our need, He is the fulfillment of the promises.

Since God has promised eternal life, he that hath the Son hath life. This promise of eternal life is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. All of the life that dying mankind could ever need is in Him.

Since God has promised victory over death, this victory is in Christ. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no victory over death apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This should give us a clue as to how we should read the Old Testament. As you read through the pages of the Old Testament, you will find many promises. Even though you find them in the Old Testament, you can take them seriously. You can know that in some way that promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. You can know that if you have Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have the very essence of that which is promised. He is God's "yes" to every promise that He has given to man.

This gives us some guidance for our prayers. We should be aware that God does not give to sinful man anything apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the promises take on reality in Him.

III. THROUGH JESUS AS GOD'S "YES," WE HAVE APPROPRIATION OF THE RESOURCES OF GOD

"And in him Amen, unto the glory of God." The New International gives us a helpful rendering of this clause. "And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." "Amen" is a Hebrew expression that has found its way into every language where the Bible has gone. The word expresses man's response to God. The root idea in the word is "to be firm" or "to be faithful." It is an adverb in which something is asserted or confirmed. It was used at the end of a sentence to say "so it is," "so be it," or "may it be fulfilled." And it is done. Wondrously our sin is removed by God in faithfulness to the promise that He has given. The same is true with each of the promises of God.

For us to add our "Amen" is for us to affirm our confidence in the faithfulness of God. Is this not what faith is? Is it not our relying upon the promises of God as being the promises of the God who cannot lie? It is our affirming the character of God. It is also for us to assert our complete reliance upon the Lord Jesus as God's "yes." It is our acceptance that this is the way man approaches God. It is our renunciation of any other basis of approach to God.

The pattern is simple. You become aware of a need in your life. You find the promise of God that relates to that need. You know that the provision for the need has been provided for you in the Lord Jesus Christ. You bring the promise to God through the Lord Jesus Christ and simply add your believing and trusting "Amen." And then the character of God is at stake. The God who cannot lie

will faithfully give what He has already offered. He does not offer that which He is not able and willing to give.

CONCLUSION

This makes the claiming of God's promises more exciting to me. It focuses my attention upon the Lord Jesus Christ for the fulfillment of the promises. It makes me more expectant since I know that the character of God is behind each of His promises. Are you ready to claim a promise this morning? Are you ready with your "Amen?"