

If you have your Bibles, why don't you go ahead and grab them? We will be in 2 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 20. Just one verse in our time together. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you don't own one, that's our gift to you. Just for the sake of getting into the sermon, I want to ask a couple of questions just so we can get to know one another.

How many of you in here have made a promise to someone before? You've made a promise. All right. So look around. This is all of us. It's unanimous. Now watch this. How many of you have made a promise and then have broken that promise? Kids, this is important. Look around. This is mom and dad too. All of us have made promises and broken promises.

Let me try to explain why we all make promises and then we all break promises. We don't break *all* of them, but we do break *some* of them. The first reason we break our promises is our hearts are crooked. The Bible talks about our hearts being sinful. When you have a sinful heart, you will oftentimes break your promises. The second reason we will break our promises is there are times we simply are not strong enough or smart enough to keep our promises.

Two years ago, my son was playing flag football. His team made it to the playoffs where apparently *everyone* makes it to now these days just to comfort their self-esteem. I was scheduled to be traveling. Reid came up to me and said, "Hey, are you going to be back in time for my game, because you know it's the playoffs?" I looked at the weather, and the weather looked good. The flight was lined up to get in time. I told him, "Buddy, I'll be at your game. I'll probably be a few minutes late, but just look for me. I'll come. I'll sit by Mom, and then I'll cheer you on, buddy."

I went, and I did the work I needed to do and went to the airport. There was a mechanical issue with the plane. I couldn't have seen that coming. They couldn't (surprisingly enough) find another plane for several hours, so I was delayed by about four or five hours. I made it home in time to preach Saturday night but did not make it home in time for Reid's game. As Reid was in this epic battle for a trophy he was going to get win, lose, or draw, he kept looking (Do I have some bitterness I need to work through?) over toward the sideline to see when Dad would show up. I simply didn't.

The ability to not keep that promise wasn't because I had a wicked, sinful heart. It was because I lacked power and knowledge. I lacked strength and smarts. I did not know the plane was going to break down,

and I lacked the ability to fly. Since those two things happened, I broke my promise because the ability to keep our promises is directly lined up with the strength we have and the smarts we have. We'll do this. Kids (first through fifth graders), how many of you would say right now, "I'm stronger and smarter than my mom"? Raise your hand, but be careful. I'm just saying be careful.

By the way, if you're a grown-up right now, you're like, "Yeah, she is like 93." You're wrong for that. How many of you would say right now, "I am stronger and smarter than my dad"? That's not true. You're just revealing a question I'll ask later about whether or not you're a liar. In the end, the reason Mom and Dad are probably better at keeping their promises right now is they are stronger than you and they are smarter than you, although one day you will more than likely be as strong and as smart as them.

You already saw Mom and Dad and the other men and women in this room raise their hand and say, "I've broken my promises." There is a limit on our strength, and there is a limit on how smart we are. But this is not true about God. God knows everything, and God is all-powerful, which is why when God *makes* his promises, God is able to *keep* his promises, because he knows everything. He is stronger than everything that is.

Ultimately, when God makes big promises, he is going to be able to keep those big promises. He wants us to be confident in his ability to keep those promises. What I want to do is I want to show you some kind of big, borderline-ridiculous promises God has made. I want to show you how he keeps those promises, and then my hope is God would make us more confident in trusting his promises. Here's kind of the first big promise we see in Scripture.

God comes to a man named Abram (who would become Father Abraham, who has many sons, and many sons will have Father Abraham). In Genesis, chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, but particularly verse 3, the Bible says this: **"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.**

**I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse..."** Listen to this. **"...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."** That is a massive, borderline-crazy promise. This would be like me pulling you away from Mom and Dad, getting down on my knees, and saying, "Through you, I'm going to take you, and we're going to make you a mighty nation. Through that nation, all the families everywhere on earth will be blessed because of you."

That's pretty big. That's not just, "You're going to a good college, Son." That's huge! I mean, borderline ridiculous. Then centuries later, he would come to a man named King David (of David and Goliath fame),

and he would say this to King David. Second Samuel 7:16 says, "**And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.**" He promises to King David that someone in his family line, someone who was going to be a relative of his, would reign and rule *forever*. They would rule forever!

It wouldn't be like, if you're studying in school, certain dynasties that kind of come and go. There will be a ruler in David's family who would rule and reign *forever*. Not for a hundred years, not for a thousand years, but *forever*. On top of these two promises, God has made promises available to everyone in this room, regardless of age, regardless of background, regardless of how you've come in. God has made promises available to any and all in this room today. Here are some of those promises.

He has promised, made available to all of us, salvation from our sin, to always and only do us good, to provide all we need, that we will never be alone, that he will hear and respond to our prayers, that he will discipline us because he loves us. When we suffer, he will sustain us. He will protect our faith in him. He will give us the Holy Spirit, and he will give us eternal life. Those are promises made available to any and all in this room even today.

This takes us to our text in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 20. Then I want us to marvel at how God has kept all of these promises. We just have kind of covered the two big ones in the Old Testament that are going to kind of unite the Old Testament to the New Testament and the ones God has made to us. Second Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 20, says this: "**For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Jesus Christ].**"

So all the promises of God find their *yes* in Jesus Christ. Then that text ends this way: "**That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.**" I want to start with the first part of this simple text that says all the promises of God find their *yes* in Jesus Christ. Let me try to explain that to you. Jesus was born a Jew in the nation of Israel among the people of Israel that were founded by Father Abraham so Jesus comes.

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the offer of blessing goes out to all men and women everywhere. So the offer is extended to the ends of the earth, so much so that the United Nations (I'm not going to explain that one; ask Mom and Dad) says that in the next 10 years, here's what we're looking at: 633 million Christians in Africa, 640 million Christians in South America, 460 million Christians in Asia.

Since I don't think these numbers are probably concrete enough for, say, a first or second grader, let me just show you. Here's us. This is North America. Dallas is somewhere in there, but that's not where it starts. It actually starts over *here*. So Abraham, the promise goes there. Christianity begins to spread throughout



How many of you have seen something good happen to someone else, and you thought, "That's not fair"? Something good has happened to someone else, and you thought, "That's not fair!" Here's the dark side of coveting. How many of you have seen something *bad* happen to someone else and thought, "That *is* fair"? Right? If you're first through fifth grade, one of your brothers and sisters gets something you don't get. "That's not fair!" But if they catch a whippin', you're like, "That's right. That's good! They had that one coming!" Right?

This is called *coveting*. Here is the thing about lying and coveting. Those are 2 of the 10. You'll fail all Ten Commandments. What's happening in both of those is you're making an accusation against God. When you say, "That's not fair," what you're saying is, "You don't know what's best for me. You're not taking care of me. You don't love me like you love them. You don't know what's best for me. I know what's best for me, and I deserve that."

People see coveting and go, "I don't know what the big deal is." Well, the big deal is you're making an accusation against a good, loving, sovereign God who has given you all you need. You're saying he is *not* good, and he *hasn't* given you what you deserve. I would even encourage you that he has *not* given you what you deserve, and that's actually a really good thing.

Then when we rejoice in the bad things that happen to others, we're placing ourselves in a posture of deity, of being god ourselves, deciding who gets justice and who gets mercy. These are accusations we make against God. It's why it's so evil. It's why lying is so evil. People are like, "Well, you know, it's just a little white lie." Well, no, no, no. You literally are saying, "The reality God has created is not good or right, so let me help him."

Lying is an accusation against God that he is not good, he doesn't know what's best, the reality you and I have been placed in by God is wrong so you need to help God out. Trust me. He doesn't need your help. If he needed your help, I'd rather worship someone else, because just looking at you... No offense, but if God is like, "Man, I just don't know how I'm going to swing this. What are you doing on Tuesday...?" If that's who he is, then I've lost all my confidence in him. That's not who he is. He doesn't need our help.

All of us, broken and bent by sin, cannot save ourselves. You have to hear this. You being better behaved is not salvation. You being a better kid, someone who doesn't break the rules all the time, who isn't prone to need to be told over and over and over again to do simple things... That's not salvation. Only Christ can save us. Let me try to explain it like this.

The Bible says Jesus comes, and he lives a perfect life. Let me translate that. I've never met a kid in the nursery who never pulled his sister's hair, never punched his brother in the face, never threw a fit, never screamed, "I don't want...!" Just didn't do any of those things, wasn't put in time out. Just think about that. There wasn't a mat he had to sit on, never caught a whippin', completely obeyed all the rules of his father, died on the cross, and on the cross hanging there with nails driven through his hands and his feet, as he died, he is absorbing, like a sponge, all of God's anger toward our misbehavior.

He is absorbing, like a sponge, all of God's anger toward where we *have* rebelled, where we *have* lied, where we *have* disobeyed, where we *have* said, "I'm going to do it my way." Jesus, on the cross, is absorbing all of it like a sponge. When I say *all* of it, I mean *all* of it. There's nothing left to be absorbed. It's all gone, fully into the sponge. When Jesus comes back to life from the dead, we have our evidence that all of our sin, all of our misbehavior, all of our rebellion has been taken care of in Jesus.

This becomes very important for you to understand. Not only did Jesus absorb all of God's anger like a sponge, but then Jesus imputes to us...or he *gives* to us...his obedience! I mean, wouldn't that be awesome if it worked like that at the house? "My brother, Charlie, is going to take the whippin' for me. He is going to give to me the obedience. He obeyed; I didn't obey. So he is going to give me his obedience, and he is going to take the spanking." That would be cool if it worked like that at home. It doesn't, but it does work like that when it comes to our heavenly Father.

So now when God looks at us, there is no anger toward our sin because it's been absorbed in Jesus Christ. What he sees in us is the perfection of Jesus Christ, the complete, perfect obedience of Jesus. That's how we are saved, not through being better, not through trying harder, not through just saying, "Yes, sir. No, sir. Yes, ma'am," not by making our beds, not by not lying. No! God will work those things out after he ransoms our hearts, after he gives us a new heart. God's promise of salvation has found its *yes* in Jesus Christ.

He also promised to always and only do us good. There's a great verse in the Bible, Romans, chapter 8, verse 28, that says all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purposes. We'll just do this. How many of you have had really bad days? Okay, now let's get real here. Kids, how many of you have had really bad days because of your parents? Go ahead. Just look at me. Don't even look at your mom or dad. Just look at me. They know.

Now let's do this. Parents, how many of you have had really hard days because of your kids? *Bam!* What's up? Huh? It looks like it's a two-way street. Here's why. I want you to see this. What is wrong with me right there? I mean, I just lost my mind. I have three kids. That's probably what happened to me right there. In the end, here's something. Especially if you're a first through fifth grader, look right at me. We moms and

dads (and every grown up you know) need Jesus just as desperately as you do. We need God's grace just as desperately as you do. We need patience just as much as you do. We need mercy just as much as you do.

When we're teaching you about Jesus, it's not because we think you need something we don't have or you need something we already possess. Rather, we're saying we all need him and continually need him, because there will be difficult days. On those difficult days, we must learn to grow in our trust that God is working all things together for good, because there will be days that doesn't make any sense and it seems like there's no way.

I can tell you now at 39, there have been seasons and days of my life, things that I've walked through that I have no idea how that was for my good. None! Even all these years later, I don't look back and go, "Oh, I see what you were doing." I'm actually, in some areas, more confused today than I was back then. Yet all the promises of God have found their *yes* in Jesus Christ.

Then from there to provide all we need, that he will hear and respond to our prayers... Why can we be confident that God will hear and respond to our prayers? Well, because when Christ looks at us, he doesn't see us as rebellious and gone anymore. In Jesus, he sees us as perfect and blameless and welcomed before him. He does hear, and he does respond, but listen. Look right at me. Sometimes he says *no*. He says *no* because he is awesome, right?

There are things you think you want... There are even things (God help us) we think we need that, if God were to give us those things, it would be unbelievably cruel. In the same way, moms and dads shouldn't delight in saying *no* but should say *no* for your own good, so our heavenly Father, who knows so much more than we do, will oftentimes hear our prayers and respond, "No. No, I'm not giving that to you." That does not make him cruel, and it doesn't mean he is not hearing you.

Think how spoiled you are if the only way God is allowed to answer you is in the affirmative. You're like Veruca Salt from *Willy Wonka*. "I want the goose!" *Pow! Pow! Pow!* Down into the chute with you. Right? No, he will say *no* because he is gracious and loving, and he knows more than we do. I'm not talking to kids right now. He will discipline us because he loves us. Don't despise the difficult days. We've talked about that quite a bit. When we suffer...not *if* we suffer...he will sustain us.

God is not a genie in a lamp, and you are not Aladdin. Any preaching and teaching from the Word of God that does not take into account we live in a fallen, broken world and we will have very sad days, we will have very hard days, we will, at times, feel like all is lost, is not preaching the full counsel of God and is doing no one any favors. The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is God will be enough on the sad

days, and God will sustain us when we are weak. God will sustain us when we are confused. God will sustain us when we feel dry and desolate and angry and empty. God will sustain us.

That's the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that he will protect our faith in him, he will give us the Holy Spirit, and he will grant to us eternal life. All of those promises find their *yes* in Jesus. All of them find their *yes* in Jesus. Then the back part of that text talks about giving our *amen* to God for his glory. Most of us just think of *amen* as kind of how we close out our prayers.

You're sitting at dinner, and you're like, "Uh, please, Lord, will you take this bacon cheeseburger we have fried in gravy, and will you make it nutritious and let it turn somehow into broccoli in my belly and strengthen my body? Then as I drink this milkshake, will you, Father, take this milkshake and turn it into rather alkaline-based water that will cleanse me from anything inside of me that is not right? Amen! So be it."

In the Bible, *amen* is agreement. It's, "So be it! Let this be." It's a statement of confidence in. When Paul is writing in the Word of God that we say *amen* to the Lord, what we're saying is we're confident he is able. Here we've prayed these things, and now we believe he is able. We cry out, "Please, God, will you hear me and respond? Amen. I believe you're able." "God, save. Amen. I believe he is able." "Father, thank you for this food. Amen. I believe you have provided this."

*Amen* has far more to do with confidence in God than it is just the way to kind of "hang up the phone." In fact, if God is everywhere always, there isn't a phone to hang up. He is always there. He hears all things. You need not be on your hands and knees with your fingers like *this*, heads bowed. He is going to hear everything, even what you're thinking. See, our God is not limited in strength. He is not limited in smarts. Therefore, all of his promises are answered. All of his promises have been answered *yes* and *amen* in Jesus Christ.

Let me just end with this. If God's promises find their *yes* in Jesus, then those promises are *no* anywhere else. If the promise is, "I will save you from your sins" and that *yes* is found in Jesus Christ, that means you will find salvation for your sins nowhere else. You will not find it in being a more obedient version of yourself. You will not find it in any other religion. You will not find it on any other path.

God's *yes* in salvation is found in Jesus Christ. God's hearing of your prayers is found *yes* in Jesus Christ. God's ability to sustain you in suffering finds its *yes* in Jesus Christ. Everywhere else the answer is *no*, not *yes*, which is why we cling to Jesus, pursue Jesus, preach Jesus, exalt Jesus, make much of Jesus. He is the author and the perfecter of our faith. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, these boys and these girls. I pray you would grow our confidence in your promises. Even now some of us have walked in. God, we just need to be reminded of some of these simple things today. We need to be reminded that you hear and respond. Many of us have been crying out, and we just haven't believed you're hearing us. We've felt alone. We've felt our prayers are hitting the ceiling. Grow our confidence. Remind us today.

Some of us are suffering, and it feels like our legs are getting weak and we're not going to make it. Sustain us, Father. Thank you that you've promised you will, and the cross and Jesus are the objective evidence that you have not abandoned us. You're good, and you do good. In all things, grow our confidence. Allow us to more passionately say, "Amen!" for the glory of your name. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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