

## God Is Faithful! Yes, He Is!

A sermon based on 2 Corinthians 1:20.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's probably the most demoralizing word you could ever possibly hear. Any guesses? Yeah, it's "no." Do you agree? You woke up this morning, the skies were all blue without a cloud in the sky, so you threw on your swimsuit, started gathering up all your beach toys, only to hear Mom say, "No, not today; it's supposed to rain a little bit later." This summer, you had your heart set on going to this week-long science camp, but only a week before, your parents said, "No, money's tight, we can't afford it this year."

It's painful to hear no, isn't it? As adults, I don't think hearing it gets any easier, does it? On your not-so-regular date night, you're all pumped to go see the new Avengers: Infinity Wars movie, and then your lovely spouse says, "No, we're not doing that" (I'll get over it!). You had your sights set on getting this dream job or of buying your dream home; you kill the interview or you put in what you think is a reasonable bid, and you're told, "No, we're going in a different direction." "No, someone else came in with a better offer and the seller jumped at it." Again, it's demoralizing.

About the only thing that's worse than hearing 'no' is when the no is attached to a promise that can/will no longer be kept. Wanting to go to the ballgame but it just not working out vs. Dad promising you that you would go the ballgame but then he backed out at the last moment because something came up at work and he had to stay late, those are two different things. Which one hurts more? Yeah, Dad saying "no" and breaking his promise.

This week at Splash Canyon VBS, we learned all about promises God makes in our lives. Those promises served as our take home points for each night, the important lessons of each day. I see a few kids from VBS here this morning. Do you remember any of our take home points? Care to review them with me? Here are some of God's promises..."God is with us! Yes he is!" "God gives us life! Yes he does!" "God gives us hope! Yes he does!" "Jesus is our Savior! Yes he is!"

We have one more this morning, our theme for today, and it's when God makes promises, "God is faithful! Yes he is!"

All of these promises are important because, as we learned, this life is one wild and crazy and sometimes scary ride, and we don't always know what's coming up around the bend.

Which makes perfect sense, then, that our verse for our sermon this morning was written by the Apostle Paul. Do you know much about him? Basically, he was a follower of Jesus and one of the greatest messengers for Jesus. One night this past week, we learned of a time when Paul was on a ship, stuck in such a terrible storm that it wrecked the ship...almost killed Paul and everyone else on board. Sound tough? Read through the book of Acts, and you would see that's only the tip of the iceberg of the uncertainties and hardships Paul endured throughout his life.

And yet, every one of God's promises – God is with us, God gives us life, God gives us hope, Jesus is our Savior, God is faithful – every one of those promises filled Paul with joy as he wrote our verse for today, again, ***"No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ."***

No matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes.” In other words, God keeps every promise he makes to us. And they’re all conveniently located here for us!

So, what are his promises? Can you think of a few? How about this one...***“I am with you always, to the very end of the age”?*** Or, ***“This is the promise that he made to us – eternal life”?*** Or, ***“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** How about, ***“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear”?***

All fine, wonderful, beautiful promises God makes to us which, again, he assures us he keeps...his answer to them is always, will always be “Yes!”

Do you believe that? Is that true? Well, our verse from 2 Corinthians this morning says that, so it must be true. So, then, that means we live our lives filled with constant joy, like Paul, and with hearts and mouths filled with constant praise to the God who keeps his promises.

I hope I’m not the only one who can’t say that’s me. And I’d be willing to bet that’s not you, either. So, then, the question is, what happens or what do you do when God’s promises are not what you want or when they aren’t fulfilled when you want them (coming as quickly as you’d like)?

Like, God promises you won’t be tempted beyond what you are capable of bearing. But what’s implied there is that you are going to be tempted. There are going to be people or objects or events coming in your life that Satan is going to use in an attempt to rip you out of Jesus’ arms and out of God’s family. And they won’t always be weak punches that you can easily sidestep or deflect; very rarely will they be. So we’re going to have to be always on guard, always watching our backs, always being ready to defend. Who here wants that? I’d rather not. Coasting along in a peace-filled life as a Christian sounds so much more appealing than cross-bearing.

Or, God promises he makes everything work out for our good (for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...that’s believers). But having lost your job a couple of months ago, not finding any real gainful employment opportunities, wondering how long you’re going to be able to survive on the severance pay, if you even got it (maybe it’s a little more scary if it’s just your savings you’re drawing down). Are you ok with saying, “God, as long as it takes, I’m ok with being patient with you”? What if it’s you trying to grow your family, like we’re doing with adoption? Or a health complication that won’t go away or a diagnosis that’s taking too long to come? And all the while, we’re seeing others around us who don’t love God and life is coming up roses for them...still patient?

God promises, “Yes, I am with you.” But, really? In those times? When I feel alone, rejected, sad, angry, lost, confused. You’re there? Again, what do you do when God’s promises are not what you want or when they aren’t fulfilled when or the way you want them to be?

Do you say “No” to God? A few verses earlier, here’s what Paul asked, ***“Do I make my plans in a worldly manner?”*** In other words, according to my sinful flesh, do I let my self-interest determine my course of action?

God asks us to be ***“joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer.”*** But when the river bend comes and the waters are too choppy, when the pain is too much, the temptation too overwhelming, the fear too overpowering, do you doubt? Say, “No, God, you aren’t really there. You don’t really care.

I'm done being patient"? And we take matters into our own hands. We get angry. We turn to sin, temptation.

What if God said, "Ok! You're on your own"? I think you know. It would, and really, our lives should, throw his last promise – eternal life – into real doubt. He should throw it away.

But ***"no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ."*** He doesn't...he's never based any of his promises – or even fulfilling them – on how they would be received by us. And thank God for that.

But are you curious how all of God's promises can be "Yes" in Christ?

One of the neat things the kids got to see and experience this past week were some science experiments. One I particularly enjoyed was in connection with the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. The experiment was here's the soda can, lying on its side. Rub a balloon on your head or a rag long enough, put it near the can, and what happens? Any kids recall? Yeah, the can started rolling along towards the balloon.

But why? It's because of static electricity, how the negative electrons of the charged balloon attract the positive protons of the can. It's science. But how God caused the waters of the flooded Jordan River to pile up in heaps so the Israelites could cross on dry ground...it wasn't science. It seemed impossible. But God performed a miracle to bring his people to the Promised Land.

How can all of God's promises be "Yes" in Christ? Friends, God uses miracles to do the impossible to keep his promises to us. And the miracle to take our sins away? Jesus, God's Son – God himself – sent down from heaven to do what we can't. He lived a life free of doubt, free of worry, free of sin...the perfect life that's impossible for us to live ourselves. But the even greater miracle was his death, where Jesus, in his love, took our negative sins on himself and, by the cross, gave his perfect life to us, as if we had never sinned. And the best part of that miracle? He rose. Jesus came back to life, opening the door for his final promise to be fulfilled to us – eternal life in heaven.

If the greatest of God's promises – eternal life – is a "Yes" for us through the miracle of Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, then every other promise he's made is most certainly a "Yes" for us. It's a promise he will keep. Right? If ever you've wondered if God loves you, cares about, wants you, think about his miracle of love...he loves us so much he kicked sinful Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden so they couldn't eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in this world of sin – and so that neither would we – but that they would die and go to be with God in heavenly perfection. God loves us so much he sent Jesus to do the humanly impossible – live and die and rise to take away our sins so we will go and be with God in eternal life.

And our response? "Through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." We say "Amen." God's promises are true. Yes they are! God is faithful to his promises. Yes he is! God fulfills all his promises. Yes he does!

And so we trust in him. Right? Isn't it comforting to know how, even if we don't always know exactly what's ahead, Jesus does. He knows exactly where your life is headed? And he's there...always. He promises his help...always. And he promises a favorable end...always.

And the doubting ceases. I've had conversations with Becky and others about how sometimes, when the waters are rough and life's not going according to plan, we often ask the wrongs questions...mostly, "Why?" "Why won't this stop" "Why is this happening to me?" "Why is God allowing this, or why can't I have that?"

Knowing all of God's promises are "Yes" in Jesus now changes those questions and doubts into something better, like, "How do I see God's love in this situation?" "How can I thank God for bringing me through this or allowing this to come so I can lean on him more?" "How is God giving me this as an opportunity to share his love?"

Or, you know what's maybe the best? In our First Lesson, when Paul was on the ship in the midst of a terrible storm and the boat was about to be wrecked, what did he do? He didn't panic. He put his trust and confidence in God's promise that he and everyone else on the ship would be saved.

Life's wild ride leads us to focus even more on Jesus and his promises to us...to be with us, to give us hope, to give us life...all because he is our Savior. Yes he is!

I want to share something a dear friend of Becky and mine wrote a couple of years ago...7 years ago after her husband passed away from a complications with a heart attack suffered in a tragic accident: **"7 years ago tonight I went to bed with such hope in my heart believing the next day Dave would recover from his heart attack and normal life would resume. Hope came from Helen who had emailed a photo she took of a rainbow seen in Minnesota that night. People said it was the brightest one they had ever seen. In Lake Benton, the rainbow ended on the cross at the top of the hill. When I woke in the morning to code blue and had to release Dave into Jesus' waiting arms, I felt deceived. Why would God send a clear reminder of His faithfulness and then take Dave away?!? Over time I've come to realize the rainbow didn't mean my prayers for Dave would be answered how I wanted but I see it as God reminding me He truly is faithful and would stay with me during the challenging road ahead."**

***"No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ."*** Believe them. Trust them. Count on them because they are promises of God who "in Christ" has been and still is the fulfiller of every promise. Our God is faithful. Yes he is! And we say, "Amen!"