

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain godly philosophy that drives real preaching and teaching – something that properly motivates the preacher. There is also an underlying message and direction in sound preaching. Properly viewed, “preaching” is not a mere profession, or an austere religious career. True preaching is not something that can successfully be exploited by men.

Some view a preacher as the official oracle for an institution, or some particular religious emphasis. Some view such a person as nothing more than a vassal of the people to serve their various mundane needs. By comparison, God views a “preacher” as someone with a message – a message that has its genesis with God Himself. It is a person He sends to deliver a word the people have been appointed to hear. As it is written, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they

be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom 10:13-15).

Preaching is a sacred stewardship appointed by God. It is essential for the things God has given to be known and practiced, for the experience of salvation is Divinely hinged to preaching – it is the means by which men are saved. As it is written, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21). In this text, the word “preaching” is not a verb, but a noun. It refers to WHAT is preached, not the act of preaching. It speaks of a message, word, or subject matter that is delivered to the people – a communication God has ordained to be delivered to the people.

Valid preaching is in no way intended to please the people. If the people are pleased by the proclamation of the ordained message, it is because they have been given “ears to hear” (Deut 29:4; Matt 13:16), and are thus delighted by the word that has been delivered.

These days there is a lot of preaching that is driven by the desires of the people rather than the will of the Lord. Paul referred to this ungodly phenomenon as an evidence that men do not have an appetite for sound, or well-grounded, doctrine. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4). The NIV reads, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”

This series of devotions is driven by an earnest desire to communicate what God intends for His people to hear. In it, I will shine the spotlight on the promises of God, affirming that they are the appointed means of partaking of the Divine nature. These promises are realized in Christ Jesus and differ significantly from the promises that were incorporated in the Law of Moses. These days media-ministers are holding out the promises of the Law (Deut 28:2-13) as applicable to those who are in Christ Jesus. Not a single one of those promises extend beyond the point of death. None of them have the element of eternity in them. None of them require Jesus. They do not even require the remission of sins, for sin of any sort, committed at any time, disqualify the people from them all (Deut 28:1,14-15).

The promises that are delivered under the administration of King Jesus are of a differing order, and have a significantly different effect upon the people. They are all appropriated by grace through faith, and no believer is excluded from them. They are not an answer to a human dilemma, but the expression of the will of God. They have more to do with eternity than with time. They blend with the revealed intention of the Almighty God to conform those whom He foreknew “to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). They are tailored to perfectly fit into Christ’s work of bringing the sons to glory (Heb 2:10), the ultimate demise of the devil (Rev 20:10), and the gathering of all things in heaven and earth into one (Eph 1:9-11). Those associations mandate the proclamation of the promises of God.

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Chapter 2

THE CONTENT OF PREACHING

As used in the above text, “preaching” is a noun, not a verb. It refers to the content of preaching rather than the act of preaching. In this use, “preaching” is equivalent to a message, or a word from God. This form of the word is used elsewhere in the Scriptures. In each of these cases, the point is not what the men were doing, but what they were saying! For those who are interested, the Greek word used in these text is “kerugma.” The lexical definition of the word is: “that which is promulgated by a herald or public crier, a proclamation by herald; in the N. T. the message or proclamation by the heralds of God or Christ” (THAYER).

1. “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at THE PREACHING of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here” (Matt 12:41; Lk 11:32). The preaching of Jonah was the message that he delivered – a message given to him by God. It was that message that provoked the repentance of Nineveh.

2. “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and THE PREACHING of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom 16:25). Here is a word addressed to the church. It concerns “THE PREACHING,” or the message concerning Jesus

Christ. That message – “the preaching” concerning Jesus Christ, according to this text, is able to establish those who are in Christ.

3. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of PREACHING to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21). This message is the means through which God saves those who believe. Nothing in the text or context suggests this is initial salvation. It is salvation in its fullest sense, which will not be completed until Jesus comes (1 Pet 1:5), and we are found to be fully “like Him” (1 John 3:1-2).

4. “And my speech and my PREACHING was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:4). The message to which Paul refers was the one He continued to declare among the Corinthian believers for a period of “a year and six months” (Acts 18:11). He also declared it again to them in his first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:1-3). It was the Gospel.

5. “And if Christ be not risen, then is our PREACHING vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor 15:14). Faith – not merely faith in its initial phase – is linked to a message, here called “our preaching” – which was, in fact, the gospel (1 Cor 15:1). For those in Christ, faith is never tied to any message other than the Gospel.

6. “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me THE PREACHING might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Tim 4:17). Here the message delivered is more than the mere recitation of a sentence or two. It is something that is

“fully proclaimed” (NIV), which includes the exposition of that Gospel – something that is found throughout the epistles.

7. “But hath in due times manifested His word through PREACHING, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior” (Tit 1:3). The word of God is not manifested through the act of preaching, but through the message that is preached. That is, the Gospel sheds light on all that Moses and the Prophets were given to say about the Savior, the new covenant, and the day of salvation (Acts 26:22; 28:23).

This precise form of the word “preaching” is also found in the prophets. Of particular note is God’s commission to Jonah. “Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it THE PREACHING that I bid thee” (Jonah 3:2).

In all of these verses, “preaching” means WHAT is proclaimed – the message, content, the proclamation, or the annunciation. According to these verses, the act of preaching and the message of the Gospel is not confined to the lost. The Gospel, together with its proclamation and exposition, continues to be for the church. The common aphorism, “preaching the Gospel is only for sinners, and “teaching is only for saints,” is not an accurate statement.

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Chapter 3

THE RELEVANCE OF “PREACHING”

f, in fact, we are “saved” by WHAT is preached, or proclaimed (1 Cor 1:21), then the content of the message being delivered is critical. God will not implement His purpose through a message that He has not ordained! As elementary as they may appear, it is most apparent that this has not yet dawned upon the religious community. When such things as hermeneutics (methodological principles of interpretation), etymology (language expertise), homiletics (the art of preaching), and theories of preaching (such as inductive and deductive) become the emphasis, the message itself necessarily falls to the ground. This is because such approaches tend to vaunt men, causing confidence to be misplaced, and faith to become less important.

None of the above technics enhance or clarify the message itself. Take, for example, the holy angels. They are noted for their wisdom (2 Sam 14:20). Yet, when it comes to the “glorious Gospel of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4), they can but “desire” to “look into” it (1 Pet 1:12). Its message is not readily apparent to them, because it does not primarily pertain to them. This being the case, what kind of imagination moves men to suppose the wisdom of men can open up a Gospel that holy angels cannot of themselves comprehend? Would a book on Hermeneutics really help the angels understand the message of the Gospel?

INSIST ON SOLID PREACHING

It is imperative that the people of God insist upon solid and firm preaching – a right message, and a proper emphasis. That message must be reflected in every aspect of godly communication. It is to be found in every sermon, every song, and every testimony. Our literature is to be marked by soundness, whether it is addressed to children or seasoned veterans in the faith. If we choose to use slogans, the Gospel message must dominate them. If we elect to have seminars, workshops, and the likes, the message God – “the record He has given of His Son” – must be their thrust. If we find it necessary to have “Christian education,” the God-ordained message must be both its pillar and ground.

While this may be very evident to you, it is apparent that this is not the experience that is most common in the religious community. If, this very day, we were to remove from public access all religious literature, audio media, and video media lacking this emphasis, countless retailers would have to close their doors. Many “Christian” publishers would go out of business over night. Countless purported “Christian schools” would have to close their doors. Vast numbers of “preachers” would have to change their careers.

Do not for one moment doubt that this is the case. Many of us are ourselves victims of a Christless Gospel – a primary message that did not center in what God has done, and is doing, through His exalted Son. We had embraced a message we thought was gospel, and were devoted to the religious institution we thought was traceable back to the day of Pentecost. But, alas, we found this was not the case at all. Many of us found that the people in the “new testament church” with which we were identified were essentially no different than the people of the world. Not only were they NOT salt and light, they were themselves part of the darkness. All of this was the result of the message that was being delivered by the

hirelings of the church.

When the early church were scattered by persecution, they penetrated other regions, doing it through “preaching” (Acts 8:4). When the city of Samaria was converted, it was through “preaching” (Acts 8:12). When persecuted believers spread out influencing the people, it was through preaching (Acts 11:19). When Paul lingered in Ephesus for three years, teaching and warning the people, it was through preaching (Acts 20:25,31). When Paul influenced the Corinthians for eighteen months, preaching was involved (1 Cor 2:4). Paul determined to make “the preaching . . . fully known” (2 Tim 4:17). God manifests His word “through preaching” (Tit 1:3).

Preaching, or proclamation, is the appointed means for initiating and maintaining faith. That is the whole point of Romans 10:14-17. Faith is not strengthened by explanation, but by proclamation. Affirmation has the precedence over explanation. When the Corinthians went backward as the result of embracing “another Jesus,” “another gospel,” and “another spirit” (2 Cor 11:4), Paul again preached the Gospel to them (1 Cor 15:1-3; 2 Cor 5:18-21).

It is time for true preaching to be revived and given a place of prominence. By preaching, I mean proclaiming, affirming, and reporting what God has done through Christ Jesus.

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These days there is a lot of preaching that is driven by the desires of the people rather than the will of the Lord. Paul referred to this ungodly phenomenon as an evidence that men do not have an appetite for sound, or well-grounded, doctrine. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4). The NIV reads, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”

IS THIS TOO STRONG?

Is this sort of word too strong? Is it a kind of overreaction to current trends and conditions? Indeed, it is not! If anything, it is actually an understatement. God has affirmed that everything hinges on a message – the message He Himself has ordained. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:11). This is “the preaching” by which God is saving those who believe: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18, NKJV).

WE NEED A SAVIOR

No one of sound mind will contest the statement that another person must actually “save” us!

1. Jesus is referred to as “the Savior of the body” (Eph 5:23), “our Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 1:10), “Christ our Savior” (Tit 1:4), and “the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14).

2. God the Father is referred to as “God our Savior” (1 Tim 2:3; Tit 1:3; 2:10), and “the Savior of all men” (1 Tim 4:10).

If God, through Christ, does not save us, we will not be saved. About this, there can be no question! As regarding our text, the issue resolves around HOW God has chosen to save us. That also has been clearly affirmed. It is through a message – “the preaching” (1 Cor 1:21).

1. We Gentiles, for example, partake of the promise of God “by the Gospel” (Eph 3:6).

2. We have been begotten “through the Gospel” (1 Cor 4:15; James 1:18).

3. Life and immortality have been brought to light “through the Gospel” (2 Tim 1:10).

4. True service to God is accomplished “in the Gospel of His Son” (Rom 1:9).

5. The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16).

6. The “fulness of the blessing” comes through “the Gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:29).

7. The “hope” by which we are saved is produced by “the Gospel” (Col 1:23).

8. The Gospel was “preached” to us “with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven” (1 Pet 1:12).

THE NECESSITY OF THE GOSPEL

Let it be clear, no aspect of the salvation of God will be realized independently of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – which is “the record,” “the preaching,” and “the power of God.” If the message that is proclaimed is not ordained by God, you may be sure, He will not support or empower it! None of the promises that He has given can be realized through a basically flawed message.

If, for example, one chooses to deliver a message of salvation by means of Law, or the realization of God’s righteousness by means of a code, that very message will not allow for the realization of those benefits. God has spoken clearly on this matter, and there is no reason for any of us to be confused.

1. “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal 2:21).

2. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4).

3. “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (Gal 5:2).

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Chapter 5

ANOTHER GOSPEL

In all the corrective teaching about not being justified by Law (Gal 2:21 ; 5:2,4), and where there had been a defection from the Gospel, people were moved to a wrong conclusion about the Law by a message – by what was preached. They had, in fact, heard “another gospel,” “which is not another,” but was nothing more than a perversion of the Gospel (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6).

The impact of an incorrect message upon its hearers is affirmed in Scripture. No child of God should take lightly the erroneous messages, or “preaching,” that are being hawked in the churches. Such messages are, so far as Divine objective is concerned, spiritually sterile. They cannot produce redemptive effects. However, they do have a calculated effect upon the minds of men. Thus we read statements like the following.

1. “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Tim 2:16).
2. “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim 2:17-18).
3. “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim 3:13).
4. “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat 15:14).
5. “Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees . . . Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Mat 16:6-12).

6. “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (Titus 1:10-11).

7. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Pet 2:1-2).

FLAWED MESSAGES

Flawed messages produce flawed Christians. Deficient messages produce deficient followers. Off-centered preaching yields off-centered living. There is a reason for this: God does not work for good through defective messages. He has developed and delivered His own message, or “record,” and that is the exclusive message through which He blesses and profits the people.

It is a most serious circumstance when a person preaches and listens to “another gospel.” Any message that cannot properly be summarized as “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11) is not good news at all. It cannot do what the Gospel of Christ can do, because it is “another gospel,” and it is totally void of “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). If, in the name of Jesus, something other than the remission of sins, reconciliation to God, access to God, and the hope of glory is being offered, it really is a worthless message. “Another gospel” is never a good gospel, a valid gospel, or a blessed gospel.

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Chapter 6

A CURRENT FAD

In our day, a new perversion has arisen, quickly vaulting into the place of religious prominence. It is a corrupt concept, attempting to merge Old Covenant manners with New Covenant blessing. I am speaking of the modern trend of “praise and worship.” This is not a mere hobbyhorse that I again wish to ride. It does have to do with the text before us.

Here is a “fad” that purports to be a sort of secret to obtaining great benefits from the Lord. People are told that their praise inducts them into the presence of God. This is a “message” or a “preaching” that is being strongly affirmed. It is largely based on Psalms 22:3; “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Psa 22:3). The idea that is being taught is that as soon as praises go up to the Lord, He comes and inhabits them. Thus “praise” is thought to be a sort of guarantee of the presence of the Lord. For this reason, “praise” (or at least, what men refer to as “praise”) has

become the most prominent part of many public gatherings. This emphasis has also been the platform on which all manner of religious careers have been developed and launched. The question is whether or not that is the meaning of the Psalm of reference.

The point of the Psalmist is not the offering of praise itself, but the PLACE where it was being offered. In those days, praise was offered in the Temple, where God is said to have dwelt – “between the cherubims” (Ex 25:22; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Kgs 19:15; Psa 80:1; 99:1).

The praise that God inhabited, therefore, was the praise that was offered where He was dwelling. God Himself was the Subject of the praises, and is thus said to be enthroned upon them – not because He came to sit upon the praises, but because they were offered insightfully, and within an acute consciousness of God.

A parallel for these New Covenant times would be praise offered in “the heavenly places” in which God has placed us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6).

It is because God dwells within those who are in Christ that He is said to occupy their praises. To teach men that God comes to us because we praise Him is nothing more than another approach to God based upon works. It is a wrong message – wrong to the core. Praise is nowhere presented in this way to the saints who are in Christ Jesus – nowhere.

In its varied forms, the Epistles contain nineteen references to “praise” (Rom 2:29; 13:3; 15:11; 1 Cor 4:5; 11:2,17,22; 2 Cor

8:18; Eph 1:6,12,14; Phil 1:11; 4:8; Heb 2:12; 13:15; 1 Pet 1:7; 2:9,14). The Gospels contain nine references (Matt 21:16; Lk 1:64; 2:13,20; 18:43; 19:37; 24:53; John 9:24; 12:43). The book of the Revelation contains a single reference (Rev 19:5).

If a very gifted logician should treat all of these verses (twenty-nine) as building blocks, he could not construct a premise that states “praise” is the way for us to enter into the presence of God. How is it, then, that this is such a common notion? It is because of a message that is being preached – a message that God has not ordained, and through which He does not work.

I have heard people say their lives have been changed by “praise” – that it has been the key that unlocked a profound love for the Lord. As convincing as their testimony may appear, it is not the truth. They have ascribed to “praise” what the Holy Spirit has ascribed to faith. This should not be difficult to receive. The phrases “by faith” and “through faith” are mentioned fifty times in Scripture – all of them being in Acts to the Revelation. We are categorically told, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). No such statements are ever made of “praise.”

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WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

It is necessary to say these things because of the nature of our text, and the characteristics of the times in which we live. Paul is explaining what he preached among the Corinthians. It was a sound and God-blessed message. He did not preach “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4) or “another gospel” (1 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6).

Elsewhere “another Jesus” is referred to as a “false Christ” (Matt 24:24; Mk 13:22). Such is also described as being a certain place: “And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not” (Mark 13:21). Just as surely as there are things to be believed, there are things that are NOT to be believed. Chief among these is a message that presents a Jesus that differs from “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). The real Jesus is made known in at least three ways.

First, this revelation is found in the record of Jesus when He “went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38). This record is found in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Second, it is found in the declaration of the Gospel, which declares the accomplishments of Jesus in the behalf of humanity. This includes the impact of His death upon the God Himself, the devil, and those who embrace it by faith. That includes atonement (Rom 5:11), reconciliation (Col 1:21), justification (Rom 3:24; 5:1), eternal redemption (Heb 9:12), sanctification (Heb 10:10,14), the making of peace (Col 1:20), and His exaltation as Head over all things (Eph 1:22). It includes bringing us to God (1 Pet 3:18), making intercession for those who are coming to God through Him (Heb 7:25), and teaching the saved about God (1 John 5:20). All of this is found in the Epistles.

Third, the real Jesus is confirmed as men are joined to Him (1 Cor 6:17), being called into His fellowship (1 Cor 1:9). It is then that they are taught by Christ (Eph 4:21), who is the solitary Expositor of God Himself. As He once said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt 11:27).

This introduces us to the real Jesus. If a "Jesus" is being preached is not clearly defined by these things, he is a false Christ – "another Jesus." Such is nothing more than the contrivance of men, designed to promote their own interests. Further, the people of God cannot be naive about these matters, and they certainly must not be ignorant of them. Those who tamper with the identity of Christ are tampering with salvation. A false Christ cannot remit sins, lead men to God, empower them, or direct them. "Another Jesus" is really an idol, just like the ones described of old: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears,

but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." (Psa 115:47-8).

Let me be clear about this. Today we are hearing about a Jesus who wants you to be rich in this world. A Jesus is being chronicled who wants men to realize the fulfillment of their dreams. A Jesus is being preached who is PRIMARILY a Healer, One who heals marriages, finances, and infirmities. No small number of people are hearing about a Jesus who loves everyone alike, does not reject anyone, and can easily tolerate sin. However, this is not how Jesus is presented by His apostles. No one of Scriptural record preached a Jesus like this. The Jesus who was preached by faithful men was set forth within the context of sin, and presented as the solitary means of being reconciled to, and used by, the Living God.

We must be able to relate this to our own times, else the benefit of it will be lost. That is, this text contains things that illuminate the conditions we are facing within the professed church. When there are uncomely responses among professed believers, the message they have heard must be examined. Either they have heard and embraced a wrong message, or they have heard and rejected a true one. Paul, therefore, declares the message he has declared. He confirms it was NOT a message that could possibly have produced the indecorous conditions that were found in Corinth. He knew by their conduct and manners that they had embraced "another Jesus," "another spirit," and "another gospel" (2 Cor 11:4).

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“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 8

UNIQUE REASONING

We should not expect the reasoning that drives proper preaching to conform to the wisdom of this world. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world (John 8:36), and hence the message of proclamation, and the reason for its proclamation cannot be of this world.

In this passage, Paul summarizes what and why he preached. You will find his reasoning to be characterized by a sweet heavenly aroma that is most refreshing to “the new man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:9). It will not, however, make any sense to those “in the flesh” (Rom 8:8-9), for they have no ears to hear these wondrous words (Deut 29:4). Only those who have chosen to traffic in heavenly realms will discern what he is saying.

THE PREACHING AND TEACHING OF JESUS

When Jesus walked among men, going about “doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:36), He spoke of His own distinctiveness, and the unique manner in which He spoke. He said to His critics, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." (John 8:23).

He told His disciples that owing to His choice of them, they were not of this world: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). He confessed the same to God during His Gethsemane prayer: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). He told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Among other things, this indicated that in His expressions and works, Jesus was not conducting Himself in the manner of this world. Whatever men may think about His condescension, He never came down so low that He thought and acted like the world. His message was not a reflection of this world, nor was it calculated to make people at home in this world. There is no record of Jesus being opposed or criticized prior to Him preaching. But as soon as He went public, following His baptism, it became glaringly apparent that He did not fit into the worldly order. Those who heard Him said, "Never man spake as this man" (John 7:46). The people were "were astonished at His doctrine: For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes " (Matt 7:28-29). The difference in His teaching was not only in its content, but in its manner as well. He did not speak as though worldly issues were the fundamental thing. The aroma of heaven was upon everything He said.

In Paul's preaching he declared a God who "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 Cor 1:27-28). He spoke of the Holy

Spirit who is given to those in Christ in this unworldly manner: "Now we have received, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor 2:12). He wrote of the "elements," or principles "of the world" as prompting bondage (Gal 4:3). He also wrote that "the rudiments of the world" will "spoil" or take people captive (Col 2:8). He said that in Christ we are "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world" (Col 2:20). John spoke of certain false teachers who went out from them in this manner: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John 4:5).

All of these things have to do with what Jesus, His apostles, and even false teachers said. Jesus and His apostles did not adapt the jargon or the concepts of this world. There was something in their preaching and teaching that simply did not mesh with this present evil world. Their reasoning, which drove their speaking, was unique.

In our day much, if not the majority, of preaching, has the stench of the world upon it. There is too much of this world in it – too much of the logic of this present evil world. The substance of much preaching and teaching is more related to this world and to heaven. It tends to orient people more to this world than to the world to come. When, in the name of Christ, lengthy speaking and writing can be devoted to marriage, money, estate planning, family, rearing children, planting churches, problem resolution, and interpersonal fleshly relationships, something is seriously wrong. This is not the message through which God is manifesting His word (Tit 1:3).

Some will ask, "Is it really wrong to speak of such things?" That is

an improper question! In view of the accomplishments and present ministry of Jesus Christ, and in light of God's eternal purpose, the question is whether majoring on such subjects is right. I am saying that it is not. The real issues do not concern what separate men from one another, but what separates them from God. If anyone imagines that resolving that issue will not have an impact upon all of the relationships of life, then there simply is a lot of wisdom that must yet be acquired.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT "YES AND "NO"

"But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 9

THE GRAND DISJUNCTIVE

““ 1:18a But . . . ” Other versions read, “As surely” (NRSV), “As” (BBE), and “Now” (DARBY).

This word is translated from a single Greek word. In Greek, this is a disjunctive meaning “but, to the contrary, rather; now; now, then, so; but also, but even, and on the other hand” (BARCLAY-NEWMAN). Lexically, it means “by way of opposition and distinction; opposed to a preceding statement” (THAYER), “a

contrast” through which a “transition” is made by “emphasizing a contrast” (FRIBERG). It is a word of “adversative force that expresses antithesis, opposition, and even contrary circumstance” (LIDDELL-SCOTT). In English, the word is not as precise. It is considered a conjunction meaning, “if it were not for the fact that” (MERRIAM-WEBSTER).

However, my purpose here is not to burden you with linguistic considerations and mere academia. There is a reason why this word is used, and why Paul introduces his thought with “but.” This word introduces a change of thought – something that contrasts with the statement made before it.

In our text, Paul has said that he had originally planned to come to Corinth, and, with their assistance, to go to Macedonia from there. However, he changed his plans because of the conditions in the Corinthian church. They were such as proved to be an aggravation to Paul, and he did not want to come to them with harshness (1 Cor 4:21; 2 Cor 10:26-8) . He held off coming at that time, therefore, so that the problems at Corinth could be addressed more gently through letters. Paul knew that this would lead to the conclusion that he was vacillating, changing his mind at every whim, and tossed too and fro by circumstance. He therefore tells them that he was not led by his own emotions – saying “yes, yes” sometimes, and “no, no” other times (2 Cor 1:15-17).

It is at this point that he introduces the disjunctive, “BUT as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay,” or “yes and no.” That is, although his plans may have changed from time to time, his message did not. It remained consistent under any and all circumstances. His plans regarding the Corinthians may have changed, but his essential message did not. This, he states, is

owing to the fact that “God is true.” The meaning here is slightly different than the expression “God is truth” (Psa 31:5; Isa 65:16). Here the meaning accentuates God’s faithfulness. He never deviates from His character or His purpose. He never conducts Himself in a manner that is inconsistent with what He has said or done in the past, or what He has pledged to do in the future. James captured this well in the phrase, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH PREACHING?

It may appear as though all of this has little to do with preaching. However, that is not the case. The point that Paul is making is that the message that is ordained of God, like God Himself, is unchanging. It is, as depicted in the Revelation, an “everlasting Gospel” (Rev 14:6). There is not one Gospel for the Corinthians, and another for the Ephesians. There is not one Gospel for the first century, and another Gospel for the twenty-first century. Whenever “another gospel” is preached, no matter what it affirms, it is not a message from God, who is faithful and consistent.

Take, for example, the Corinthians and the Galatians. Both of these churches were charged with embracing “another gospel.” Paul charged the Corinthians with being gullible in receiving such a perversion (2 Cor 11:4). He told the Galatians that, in embracing another gospel, they had “removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ” (Gal 1:6). He also said that it really was not “another gospel.” That is, God has not updated, so to speak, the Gospel, which is His power unto salvation (Rom 1:16). He has not introduced a more relevant message, or one that is tailored for a particular generation. He has not adapted the Gospel to changing

appetites and disinterested people. Such a gospel is a total misrepresentation of the Living God, Jesus Christ His Son, and the will and purpose of God.

Today we are hearing different gospels. There is the “gospel of the family,” “the gospel of health and wealth,” “the gospel of success,” and “the gospel of the church” itself. There is “the gospel of you-can-do-better,” and even the gospel of “you-can-do-it-if-you try.” Some are preaching “the gospel of God-wants-to-fulfill-your-dreams.” Some egotists are even preaching “the gospel of I’ve-got-the-answer.”

The point is that there are a lot of things being chronicled as “good news” that have not come from God. As good as they may sound, they do not represent Him or His purpose. None of these erroneous gospels major on preparing for death and eternity. None of them speak of being set in heavenly places. None of them accent eternity, and all of them accent life in this world.

The real Gospel, and real preaching, set the exceeding precious promises of God before the people – and none of them are “yes and no!”

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 10

A MORAL UNIVERSE

We occupy a moral universe – one in which there are competing influences that are hostile toward one another – influences that are mutually exclusive. That is, you cannot yield to one of them without rejecting the other. The influences are traced back to two personalities. One is superior, and one inferior. One is good, and the other is evil. One seeks the benefit of man, and the other seeks his demise. One speaks and acts with eternity in mind, and one confines both his words and deeds to “this present evil world.” The personalities are God and Satan. Satan is not only inferior, he is subject to God, although he does not will it to be so. Being superior to Satan, and Satan being subject to Him, God uses Satan, but Satan cannot use God. In the end, God will openly and apparently triumph, and Satan will obviously and unquestionably go down in defeat.

A moral universe is one in which men are subjected to both of these influences. Specifically, it is the world in which flesh and blood lives. Heaven, for example, is not a moral universe. It is not a place where choices between good and evil are required – not since Satan has been expelled from it (Luke 10:16; Rev 12:7-9). Hell is not a moral universe. There is no opportunity or possibility to choose the good in that dreaded place. The world is the only known domain where man, created in the image of God, is faced with the opportunity of choosing either good or evil. That is a moral universe.

When men address this circumstance they are fond of speaking of the free will of man” – of what is called “the free moral agency of man.” Neither of these phrases is found in Scripture. Furthermore, there is no doctrine, of exposition of, “the free will of man” in the Scriptures – not so much as a syllable. Men might prefer that this circumstance did not exist – but it does. No amount of reasoning can put that doctrine in Scripture. All such teaching is confined to the court of human interpretation and tradition, and cannot reach beyond that circumference – like it or not.

When addressing this situation, Scripture emphasizes what must be done with human desire. Man, by both creation and placement, "should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). When men are presented with the Son of God, they are under obligation to believe on Him, receive Him, and live unto Him (Acts 19:4; John 1:12; 2 Cor 5:15). They are not free to do anything else, for damnation will be the lot of all who refuse to do this (Mk 16:16; 1 Thess 1:8).

Those who refuse to seek God, receive Christ, and those who refuse to “live unto Him” (2 Cor 5:15) are never viewed as “free moral agents” – NEVER! They are rather declared to have been duped by the devil. As it is written, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:4). It does not say that they simply chose to follow another course.

When it comes to influences that demand a choice, we ultimately have to do with the corrupting “prince of the power of the air”

(Eph 2:2), and the Holy Spirit, who is noted for striving with men (Gen 6:3). Each of these spirits employs a message (Gal 1:6; 1 Pet 1:12). Each use “words” (1 Cor 2:4,13). Each employs a special “wisdom” that promotes their purpose, or assists in fulfilling their agenda (James 3:15-17).

These messages, words, and wisdom, are not simply different. They are hostile toward one another – so much so, that they cannot be embraced simultaneously. In order to adopt one message, you must reject the other. In order to employ one vocabulary, you must refuse the other. In order to have one wisdom, you must deny the other. One message is true, and the other is false. One set of “words” is right, and the other is wrong. One form of wisdom is legitimate, and the other is illegitimate.

The only valid response of men is to yield to the Spirit of God, believe the Gospel, receive the Son, and live for Him . Men are not “free” to do something else. If they do choose another gospel, another master, and live for another objective, it is not because they are “free,” but because they have been captured the devil (2 Tim 2:24-26). In such a case, no exercise of the will can free them from their dilemma. They must be delivered from it. On the other hand, when the Gospel is believed, Christ received, and life lived “unto Him,” there is no outside influence that can void that choice or the safety it brings (John 10:28-29; Rom 8:38-39).

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

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and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 11

WHAT PAUL IS SAYING

Paul has just affirmed that he was not vacillating and indecisive in determining to come to Corinth. Those were characteristics of a competing kingdom from which he had been delivered. He did not purpose “according to the flesh,” being motivated by the Adamic nature, and driven by temporal considerations. Neither, indeed, did he glibly say “Yes” and “No,” tending to alter his plans for mere personal advantage. Such motivations were from the domain of flesh and blood – the world that is perishing, and the flesh that has been summarily rejected by God.

The word “BUT” stands between to alternatives that cannot be reconciled or made to fit together.

This manner of reasoning serves to clarify the truth that makes us free (John 8:32). It expands our understanding by way of contrast. That contrast is so sharp and unbending that the nature of truth itself is confirmed to our hearts. A few examples of the Spirit’s employment of the word “but” will serve to corroborate this observation. In each of the following examples, the contradicting conditions are separated by the word “but.”

1. Rarely would a person dare to die for a righteous man, BUT God commended His love in Christ dying for sinners (Rom 5:7-8).

The nature of man is contrasted with the nature of God, which effectively rises above human nature, doing what no man would of himself do.

2. We were the servants of sin BUT now, in Christ, we have become servants of righteousness (Rom 6:17-18). What we are in Christ Jesus not only contrasts with what we were, but is vastly superior to that former condition, effectively freeing us from it.

3. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and the heart has not conceived the things God has prepared for those who love Him, BUT God has revealed them to us by His Spirit (1 Cor 2:9-10). What cannot possibly be discovered by men is marvelously revealed by God through the Holy Spirit.

4. Prior to being in Christ, we were children of wrath, BUT God, who is rich in mercy, in love quickened us together with Christ (Eph 2:3-4), changing our position and status. Our destiny was changed by the working of God, which is transcendent to anything man can do, thereby changing both their character and condition.

Now Paul will affirm his manner of ministry was in accord with the nature of God and the manner of the heavenly Kingdom. His labors were not in competition with God, but were rather together with Him (1 Cor 3:9). He declared a clear and unwavering message. It was never changed or updated. The Gospel is to salvation what a dynamo is to an electrical distribution center. It is the driving force behind moral change and spiritual development. Where the Gospel is not regularly preached and expounded, spiritual life wanes and is men cannot “go on to perfection” (Heb 6:1).

What Paul is saying is that his message never changed because of its nature and place in the redemptive economy. He never allowed it to be upstaged by another emphasis. All reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness were designed to get men into a place where they could receive and perceive the truth of the Gospel. Those activities (reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16), are not ends of themselves. They are not areas in which men are to become experts, limiting their Kingdom involvements to such things. The power of God unto salvation is not in reproof. It is not in correction. It is not in instruction in righteousness. Those things are necessary, but they are always the prelude, and not the symphony of spiritual life.

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Chapter 12

GOD IS TRUE

“But as God is true . . .” Other versions read, “God is faithful” (NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV), and “God is trustworthy,” (NJB). The word “true” is taken from the Greek word “pis-tos.” It is similar to

the word that is frequently translated “faith” (pis-tis) , but not identical with it. As used in our text, the word means “trustworthy, faithful, worthy of trust, to be relied on, dependable, and sure” (THAYER). Other lexical definitions are, “trustworthy, faithful, dependable” (FRIBERG), “sure, true, unfailing” (UBS), and “trustworthy, worthy of credit” (LIDDELL-SCOTT).

CHRIST’S WORD

The Lord Jesus made this very statement when declaring the veracity of what He declared: “He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that GOD IS TRUE” (John 3:31-33, NKJV). The idea is that God’s truthfulness and faithfulness is confirmed in those who receive and rely upon what He has said.

We know God is true by what He has said, which stands any and every test, for God “cannot lie” (Tit 1:2). The same is true of the words of Christ Jesus, whom God sent into the world. The validity of Christ’s word is not to be determined by those who have not received it, but by those who have embraced it.

PAUL’S PREACHING

In this passage, Paul is declaring that his preaching was as faithful as God is true. That is, he did not preach a shaky and unstable Gospel. He calls God to witness concerning the stability of the word that he preached.

Paul was not caught up in faddish preaching – the latest methods and techniques, contemporary buzzwords, and the issues of the day. However valuable such messages may appear to be, they are not what God uses: they are not “the power of God unto salvation.” What he preached was as sure and dependable as God is faithful: “AS God is true . . .” That is, God is faithful. He never deceives His people, or fails to do what He has promised. The message that Paul preached was in that category. It did not have to be altered or updated, and at no point became obsolete or irrelevant. It did not have to be shaped to fit the culture of the times.

This means that Paul spoke with the Lord in mind. He knew what God was doing, and spoke in concert with it. He did not allow himself to be swayed by the will of the people, or what men considered to be timely and crucial. He was primarily the servant of God, not the servant of men (Gal 1:10). His knowledge of God and His will was woven together with a love for Christ and a quest to be found in him not having a righteousness of his own, but that which is from God by faith (Phil 3:9). That is why his preaching was sound, dependable, and unchanging.

Some, looking upon Paul’s unfulfilled commitment to come to Corinth, concluded that he was not dependable, and hence could not be an Apostle. However, Paul made clear to them that his intentions to visit them were subject to the will of God (1 Cor 4:19). Additionally, no such vacillation accompanied his preaching. The message that he declared was the result of knowing the will of the Lord. It sprang from the knowledge of the unchangeable purpose of God. That is the only kind of preaching that can deliver the promises of God to the people. The “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet 1:4) that issue forth from God cannot be contained in the fractured vessels of human tradition and sectarian emphases.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

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Chapter 13

A NEED OF OUR DAY

Much of the preaching of our day is unstable, to say the least. If it was not for national holidays and contemporary social and domestic issues, some men would have little to preach about. Many church members are subjected to a weekly dose of practical suggestions. The subject material of the professed preacher is filled with “yes” and “no,” thereby contradicting the preaching of Paul, who was sent forth by Jesus. I realize that a lot of this is the result of a lack of appropriate preparation. However, I fear that a considerable percentage of it is driven by a lack of spiritual understanding, or acquaintance with the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

Some preachers build their sermons around the self-assessed needs of the people, instead of the God-revealed ones. No foundational teaching of Scripture is based upon social or domestic need. The basic need of man is reconciliation to God and a sustained fellowship with Christ. Both of these are initiated at a certain point in time, but both of them are to be sustained. For example, Paul

said to the church at Corinth, "'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20).

Although there was a point when this reconciliation had taken place, they had fallen away from God, and were conducting their religious lives within the persuasion of "another Jesus," "another gospel," and "another spirit" (2 Cor 11:4). Their concept of "need" was changed, and so they adopted a message and a savior that suited that need instead of the God-defined one.

The truth of the matter is that many professing Christians do not see a need to be "reconciled to God." They do not feel obligated to have His thoughts and ways (Isa 55:8-9). They are quite comfortable admitting they do not see things the way God does. Countless times I have heard fledgling ministers read a text of Scripture and admit, "That is not the way I would have said it." Or, they have read of some Divine act or judgment and confessed, "That is not the way I would have done it." Some are so meshed with their religious system that they speak for the people. When reading of a Divine requirement they say, "But that is not the way we are. We would rather go our own ways" – and all the people like sheep without a shepherd say, "Amen."

Such circumstances reveal a people who are ill-at-ease in the presence of God, and therefore attempt to maintain their religious lives at a distance from Him. This is the thing that compels them to demand preaching and teaching marked by brevity and infrequency. The preaching they are hearing leaves them thinking that this is really acceptable. A God of love and tolerance is preached that leaves the people imaging that God understands and is willing to live with their attempts to live at a distance from Him. But this is

really nothing more than an imagination.

Jesus once said to some meticulously religious Jews, "And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). Those Jews were not willing to obviously abandon the Scriptures and the ceremonies that had been given to them. They would not consent to life without any overt religion. However, when Truth incarnate appeared before them, they rejected Him, and refused to receive Him. As it is written, "He came unto his own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Only a fool would affirm this kind of response was acceptable to God. Yet, that very same circumstance is a growing phenomenon in the American church.

The American church would profit from a good dose of godly certainty from the pulpit and the teacher's desk – something that faith can grasp, and upon which holy lives can be built. We need to hear more messages that reflect the mind of the Lord and declare His purpose. We have had enough preaching that has little or nothing to do with the world to come – a world that is the subject of inspired communication (Heb 2:5)! My heart longs to hear powerful preachers who can call God to witness to their veracity, and preach with holy certainty! Men of whom it can be truthfully said, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us . . . was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes" (2 Cor 1:19).

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1:18-20)

Chapter 14

OUR WORD TOWARD YOU

“ . . . our word toward you was not yea and nay.”

OUR WORD

“ . . . our word . . . ” Other versions read, “our message,” NIV “for our preaching,” DOUAY and “what we say.” NJB

Paul now focuses upon what he preached – what he proclaimed, his message. He did not travel about as a sort of spiritual problem-solver or counselor. He was not merely a Bible answer man – although he did answer inquiries, bringing the truth to bear upon the difficulties and challenges believers faced.

“Our word” had to do with his message – the essential content of what he declared. Paul referred to this core message in a variety of ways.

- The Centrality of the cross: “the preaching of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18).
- The announcement of Good News: “the Gospel which I preached”

(1 Cor 15:1).

- Opening up the mystery: “the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery” (Rom 16:25).
- Provision for participation: “to make all men see the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph 3:9).
- The Person and accomplishments of Christ: “I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:19).
- The beneficent purpose of God: “I have preached to you the Gospel of God” (2 Cor 11:7).
- The vicarious death of Jesus: “I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).
- A message of sanctifying glory: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery”(Col 1:27).
- The sin-bearer: “we preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23).

The weakness of the modern church lies in the absence of a sanctifying, clarifying message. Too often a message is adopted that does little more than promote a group, and set before the people a humanly developed concept, falsely called a “gospel.” There is also an evident propensity for majoring on social issues. I sometimes get the impression that if was not for national holidays, special events, and the daily newspaper, some ministers would

have little to talk about. This is not the case with messengers sent from God. That is why Paul says elsewhere, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:15). The Kingdom of God knows nothing about a messenger that has no message, or preachers that are without a preaching!

Paul’s message was consistent, and was at the root of everything he taught. He built upon a Gospel foundation, always bringing people to the point of considering what the Lord has accomplished in Christ Jesus.

This nucleus message is what he calls “our word.” It was a word so apparent that everyone caught his emphasis.

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Chapter 15

TOWARD YOU

“ . . . toward you . . .” Other versions read, “to you” (NKJV),

“which was to you” (DOUAY), and “what we say to you” (NJB).

Powerful preaching is personal – “toward you.” This does not mean it focuses on purely personal difficulties or challenges. Rather, it takes the things of God and brings them to bear upon the individual. The “record God has given of His Son” is applicable to every person, and it is to insightfully preached with that perspective.

The messengers of God do not bring a message for human evaluation, but one that is to be received and imbibed. The Gospel announces a real Savior that has addressed man’s real need, and provides a real salvation. Any other gospel is really “not another” (Gal 1:6-7).

It ought to be noted that the Gospel does not need to be “applied,” or fortified with anecdotes and illustrations that supposedly make it more personal. The very thought of blending an “everlasting Gospel” (Rev 14:6) with the fluctuating wisdom of men is an absurdity. The Gospel is, in every sense, “toward you.” The insightful preacher knows this, and therefore does not get caught up in impersonal and distracting fads.

All of this is in perfect keeping with the nature of salvation, and how it is presented in Scripture. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul depicted salvation in Christ as the result of Divine activity “toward us.” “. . . He hath abounded toward us . . .” (Eph 1:8).

HE HATH ABOUNDED. Salvation is by no means characterized

by sparsity or meagerness. There is no rationing of the provisions of grace – no law against gathering what it has supplied. If one only considered the professing church, there is no way that one would conclude that salvation is noted for an abundance of what grace brings. Ponder the number of references to the abundant nature of salvation:

1. Life “more abundantly” (John 10:10)
2. “Poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45)
3. “Riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (Rom 2:4)
4. “Receiving an “abundance of grace” (Rom 5:17)
5. “Grace did much more abound,” Rom 5:20)
6. “How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Rom 8:32)
7. “Riches of His glory” (Rom 9:23; Eph 3:16)
8. “Riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom 11:33)
9. “For all things are yours” (1 Cor 3:21)
10. ”Possessing all things” (2 Cor 6:10)
11. “Riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7)
12. “Riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18)
13. “Rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4)
14. “Exceeding riches of His grace” (Eph 2:7)

15. "Unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8)
16. "Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph 3:20)
17. "His riches in glory" (Phil 4:19)
18. "All riches of the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2)
19. "The treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3)
20. "Ye are complete in Him" (Col 2:10)
21. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col 3:16)
22. "God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim 6:17)
23. "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim 3:17)
24. "The Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly" (Tit 3:6)
25. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: (Heb 6:17)
26. "Rich in faith" (James 2:5).

There is an approach to salvation, in both its initiatory and ongoing aspects, that manages to hide the abundance that is realized in Christ Jesus. That is chiefly found in attempting to serve God by Law, adopting a strictly philosophical view of redemption, or being caught in the snare of institutionalism, which gravitates to the traditions of men, formulated into a law.

TOWARD US. The point is not where this abundance is found, but

where it is directed. The possession of these benefits is realized by faith. They are not automatically deposited in every professing Christian. Even when they are actually received, the measure to which they are experienced is strictly governed by faith, for we both “live” and “walk” by faith (Rom 1:17; 2 Cor 5:7). This fact is what mandates that preaching be directed to the people in the name of the Lord. Preaching is not mere oratory, or some form of entertainment. It is an announcement of what the Lord has done.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 16

NOT YEA AND NAY

“ . . . was not yea and nay.” Other versions read, “was not yes and no” (NKJV), “was not, It is, and It is not” (DOUAY), “is not both Yes and No” (NJB), and “I am not that sort of person. My yes means yes” (NLT).

The words “yea and nay,” or “y es and no,” do not mean “positive and negative,” or “blessings and curses.” They rather denote a stable and consistent message. The Gospel is not “Yes” to men, and “No” to women. It is not “Yes” to the Jew, and “No” to the

Gentile. It is not “Yes” to the free, but “No” to the bond, or slave. That is why it is written, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). It is not “Yes” to the formally educated, and “No” to those lacking formal education.,

There were other messages being submitted to the people – messages that declared “another Jesus,” and offered “another spirit” to be received (2 Cor 11:4). By their very nature, those spurious messages were “sometimes yes,” and “sometimes no.” They were not consistent, and therefore required continual updating, explanation, and application.

In our day, there are gospels that are for men, others for women, and still others for young people. There are gospels that are tailored for single people, others for married people, and even some for those who have been divorced. These are all messages that are “yea and nay.” There is also a gospel of the Holy Spirit, a gospel of the true New Testament Church, and a gospel of prosperity and health. But they are all “Yes and No” messages. They have restricted theological fences around areas that are intended to be open and free, and they have assigned freedom to areas where the Spirit has said “No” (Tit 2:11-12). They are “Yes and No” messages, and consequently cannot be called “Gospel.” They are to be rejected by the people of God. A preacher, for example, who falls into immorality has a “yes and no” message – it allows him liberties it does not allow to others.

Because the Gospel deals with an “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15), “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), “eternal life” (1 John 5:11,13), “eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10), an “eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17), “things” that are “eternal” (2 Cor 4:18), and an “eternal

purpose” (Eph 3:11), its message cannot be inconsistent – “sometimes yes and sometimes no.” An “eternal purpose” cannot be implemented by changing means and an unstable message.

What is more, any approach to preaching that relies on the wisdom of this world and the expertise of men will, by that very circumstance, be characterized by change – by “Yes and No.” Such approaches are buttressed by historical findings, statistics, language expertise, psychological principles, motivational technics, and the likes. They do not rest solely upon the truth of God.

However valuable such things may appear, they must not be a part of the message itself. The addition of these things is like leaven that corrupts. It causes men to preach a message that is subject to constant change – “Yes and No.”

Also, there are several valid perspectives of this verse.

1. Paul’s preaching was in strict harmony with the revealed purpose of God.
2. He declared a message marked by clarity – one that was not ambiguous.
3. He did not center in temporal issues, thereby necessitating a message that was constantly changing.

4. All of his communications, whether oral or in writing, were characterized by unchangeableness and constancy.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 17

THE SON OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST

“ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you . . . ”

Paul now takes us to the heart and the core of his message – “the preaching” that he preached. This will account for the stability and constancy of his message. Everything that he preached was ultimately traced back to Jesus Christ. He was the fundamental premise of Paul’s preaching – the primary fact of it. Preaching – any preaching – is only as stable and dependable as its major premise – its basic foundation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPHASIS

What is emphasized in our preaching is our message. To put it another way, preaching takes on the character of its emphasis. All of this may seem rather incidental, and unworthy of mention. However, this is a more critical issue than appears on the surface.

Allow me to recall to your mind some of the varied emphases in the Christian world – emphases that determine the message that is being proclaimed.

1. **AUTHORITY.** Emphasizing the strata of official human authority within the church. This involves a human judgment of who can and cannot speak, and in what capacity they do so.

2. **CHURCH.** The Church emphasis. In this case, sectarian interests rise to the surface, and maintaining the institution becomes primary.

3. **ORGANIZATION.** The organizational emphasis places great stress upon who on earth has the authority to “run the show,” so to speak. When and how things are done become the means of identifying the group.

4. **PROBLEM RESOLUTION.** The Christ-can-solve-all-of-your-problems emphasis. Here, what men perceive to be their need is pushed ahead of what God is declared to be the need.

5. **PROSPERITY.** The prosperity emphasis, which blatantly states that the Lord wants His people to be rich and successful in this

world.

6. SABBATH. The Sabbath day emphasis. Some sects even teach that this is the mark of distinction among Christ's disciples.

7. SECURITY. The eternal security emphasis. In this case, the security of the people is taught without giving due heed to the necessity of maintaining faith.

8. SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit emphasis stresses spiritual gifts that impact everything from prayers to prophecy. Having certain gifts is even set forth as a premier mark of spiritual distinction.

9. SOUL WINNING. The soul winning emphasis. This has gained world-wide prominence among professing Christians, although there is not a syllable said about it in the letters to the churches – which are often said to have increased in number.

10. WORKS. The works emphasis. Here what men do is given more attention than what the Lord has done. The emphasis is especially tailored for dead churches.

11. PROCEDURAL. There are also those who emphasize proper procedures: (1 What the church is to be called, (2 What believers are to be called, (3 What the preacher is to be called, (4 What we say when a person is baptized, (5 What "the day of worship" is called, (6 How we sing, etc.

Some of these may appear rather foolish to you, but there are some professed believers who make such things their stress. They even divide the body of Christ over these issues, forming denominations around these matters.

However, after all of these emphases, and others, have been declared, God has placed the stress upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Remove Him from the theological equation, and all religion topples to the ground, powerless and useless in every sense of the word. Perceive and declare Christ Jesus as the Cornerstone of everything spiritual and theological, and you are tapping into Divine power. You will also experience some degree of variance with, what is called, “Christendom.”

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 18

THE EXPRESSION

Here is the embodiment of sound theology: “The Son of God, Jesus Christ.” Here is the avatar of salvation: “The Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

First, this is a redemptive view of the Lord – a description of the “Savior of the body” (Eph 5:23), or “the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior” (Tit 1:4). Elsewhere He is called “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13).

Let it be clear, this is how we are to view the Savior: “the Son of God, Jesus Christ.” When I first moved to the Joplin area, the hot topic of discussion among the Bible College students was whether or not Christ was God. It was not uncommon to see tee shirts displaying the words “Jesus is God.” There is, of course, no question about the Savior’s Divinity. He is categorically referred to as “the great God” (Tit 2:13), and His name is “the Mighty God” (Isa 9:6). The Father Himself said to Jesus, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Heb 1:8). When He dwelt among men He was “God with us” (Matt 1:23) and “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16). The debate concerning Christ’s Divinity is a foolish one, for God has left no doubt about that matter.

However, we are saved by Christ's humanity, not His Deity! He died as a Man. He was buried as a Man. He rose from the dead as a Man. He ascended into heaven as a Man. Now He is mediating the New Covenant as “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). As the federal head of a new generation, He is “the Second Man” (1 Cor 15:47). In His identity with the fallen race, He is “the Son of man” (Matt 8:20 – this phrase is used 83 times in the Gospels).

The confession of the humanity of Christ is an foundation upon which Divine acceptance is based. “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even

now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:2-3). Among other things, this means Jesus was really tempted, really died, really was raised, really ascended into heaven, and was really exalted.

THE SON OF GOD

Jesus was uniquely begotten of God (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9), and is therefore called “the Son of God.”

1. The perception and confession of this is the rock upon which the church is founded (Matt 16:16-18).
2. This is the very point Satan challenged in Christ’s wilderness temptation (Matt 4:3,6).
3. When Jesus was tried, this was the issue with his Jewish accusers (Matt 26:63; Lk 22:70).
4. Those who mocked Him when He was on the cross challenged Him on this very point (Matt 27:40,43).
5. This is the fact perceived by a certain centurion when Jesus died (Matt 27:54).
6. The very Gospel itself is called “the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mk 1:1).

7. When Jesus invaded the world of darkness during His ministry, unclean spirits confessed this truth (Mk 3:11; Lk 4:41).

8. When Gabriel announced to Mary that the Savior was to be born through her, he said He would be called “the Son of God” (Lk 1:35).

9. John the Baptist bore record that Jesus was “the Son of God” (John 1:34).

10. After healing a man born blind, Jesus asked him “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” (John 9:35).

11. John wrote His gospel that we might believe “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31).

12. This is the truth that, when confessed, qualified the Ethiopian eunuch to be baptized (Acts 8:37).

13. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, this is the message that he immediately began to preach: “that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

14. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He was “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom 1:4).

15. God dwells in the person who confessed this truth, and that person dwells in God (1 John 4:15).

16. The person who believes that “Jesus is the Son of God” overcomes the world (1 John 5:5).

17. The Gospel is referred to as “the record God that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10).

I hardly see how anything can be emphasized more strongly.

Jesus was not, as some theology affirms, “the eternal Son of God.” There was a unique juncture in time when He was “begotten.” Scripture states it this way, “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (Heb 1:5). This was true when He was born of Mary. It was also true when He was raised from the dead. As it is written, “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (Acts 13:33). In His birth He was begotten to be identified with the ones He came to save, and to ultimately die in their stead. In His resurrection He was begotten to return to heaven and ever live to intercede for those coming to God through Him, saving them “to the uttermost” (Heb 7:25).

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay,

but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 19

THE SON OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST

“The Son of God” refers to Christ’s Manhood – an identity that was essential to the salvation of men. Since the fall came by a man (Adam), the recovery from that fall must also come from a man (Rom 5:12-19). As it is written in the book of Hebrews, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:14-15).

The humanity of the Savior required a remarkable condescension – beyond all human comprehension. The time when “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) is referred to as the Savior emptying Himself, or making Himself “of no reputation” (Phil 2:7). Technically, He did not cease to be God, for that was His inherent nature. However, He sheathed His Deity, refusing to use it to assist Him in being tempted, suffering, laying down His life a ransom for many, and destroying the devil (Heb 2:14). Instead of being framed, as it were, with Deity, He “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:7-8).

Jesus did not overcome Satan as God, but as a man – “the Man Christ Jesus.” Had He defeated the devil as God, it would not have been applicable to men. In such a case, it would only have counted for Himself. Further, He did this as the Man ordained by God for that task.

All of this is involved in Jesus being “the Son of God.” In my judgment, the modern church has not done well in their proclamation of this pivotal truth.

JESUS

Whereas the Savior was known as “the Word” prior to His incarnation (John 1:1,14), He was known as “Jesus” when coming into the world. That was His human name. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, making known the manner of child that was to be birthed by Mary, his wife. He strictly charged Joseph, “thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).

The name “Jesus” means “Jehovah is salvation,” and is the Greek form of “Joshua.” Just as Joshua led the people into the promised land (John 1:2-3), so the Lord Jesus “will save His people from their sins,” leading them to glory to possess their promised inheritance (Heb 2:10).

Whereas the term “Son of God” emphasizes the One who send the Savior into the world, “Jesus” emphasizes the ones with whom He was identified (Heb 2:14). As one of us, He would lead us. He would gain the victory as a Man, represent us before the Father as a Man, intercede for us as Man, and bring us to glory as a Man –

the glorified Man, Christ Jesus. Therefore, it is true “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Phil 2:10).

CHRIST

“Christ” means “the Anointed,” and is the equivalent of the Old Testament word “Messiah” (Dan 9:25-26). The Lord Jesus is “THE Christ” (Matt 16:16,20; 26:63; Mk 8:29; 14:61; Lk 3:15; 9:20; 22:67; John 1:20,41; 3:28; 4:29,42; 7:41; 10:24; 11:27; 20:31; 1 John 2:22; 5:1). He is uniquely anointed as the solitary hope of humanity. He is the “nail” that, according to Isaiah, was fastened in “sure place,” upon which everything was suspended (Isa 22:22-25).

Being “the Christ” postulates the following:

1. If anyone was going to “save His people from their sins,” He would have to do it (Matt 1:21).
2. If the sin of the world was going to be taken away, He would have to do it (John 1:29).
3. If the devil was going to be destroyed, He would have to do it (Heb 2:14).
4. If the principalities and powers that held humanity captive were to be destroyed, He would have to do it (Col 2:15).

5. If the sins of the world were going to be laid on anyone, it would have to be Him (Isa 53:6).

6. If anyone was going to bear our sins in His body, it would have to be Him (1 Pet 2:24).

7. If anyone was going to be “made sin for us,” it would have to be Him (2 Cor 5:21).

8. If anyone was going to be “made a curse for us,” it would have to be Him (Gal 3:13).

9. If anyone was going to bring us to God, He would have to do it (1 Pet 3:18).

10. If anyone was going to bring the sons to glory, He would have to do it (Heb 2:10).

11. If anyone was going fully please God, it would have to be Him (Isa 53:11; Matt 3:17).

12. If anyone was going to lay down His life, and take it up again, it would have to be Him (John 10:17-18).

13. If anyone was going to be “tempted in all points as we are,” it

would have to be Him (Heb 4:15).

14. If anyone was going to build the church, it would have to be Him (Matt 16:16).

15. If anyone was going to effectively intercede for those coming to God, it would have to be Him (Heb 7:25).

16. If anyone was to bare our griefs and carry our sorrows, it would have to be Him (Isa 53:4a).

16. If anyone was going to be stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, it would have to be Him (Isa 53:4b).

17. If anyone was going to be “wounded for our transgression,” it would have to be Him (Isa 53:5a).

18. If anyone was “bruised for our iniquities,” it would have to be Him (Isa 53:5b).

19. If the chastisement of our peace was going to be placed on anyone, it would have to be Him (Isa 53:5c).

20. If we were going to be healed by the stripes of anyone, it would have to be the stripes that fell upon Him (Isa 53:d).

The hopes of the world were totally dependent upon one Man – one Messiah – One Christ – one Anointed One. The prophets told us this was the case. Foreseeing the time of the Christ Isaiah wrote, “And A MAN shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa 32:2). That “Man” is the one anointed by God (Acts 10:38) – the Christ.

If you want to receive something from God, it has to come from Christ. If you want God to receive you, it has to be through Christ. If you want to come to God, it has to be through Christ.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 20

THE RELATION OF JESUS TO GOD

Jesus is not our Christ, but GOD’S Christ – His “Anointed One.” He is therefore called “the Christ of GOD” (Lk 9:20), “the LORD’S Christ” (Lk 2:26), and “HIS Christ” (Acts 4:26; Rev 11:15; 12:10). The Lord Jesus is God’s “chosen” (1 Pet 2:4) and “elect” One (1 Pet 2:6) – the solitary Person charged with the responsibility of bringing the sons to glory.

The “Christ” is the only one who can save. The church cannot save us. The Law cannot save us. The wisdom of men cannot save us. Rules and disciplines cannot save us. Jesus is “THE Christ” – the ONLY one who is anointed and sanctioned BY GOD to accomplish salvation. If our preaching and teaching lead people to any other conclusion, they are skewed in the wrong direction, are off center, and are in every way powerless.

“The Son of God, Jesus Christ” is the hub of sound doctrine and the core of all acceptable preaching. All “sound doctrine” – every syllable of it – is founded upon Christ. The benefits that are heralded by the Gospel find their origin and foundation in the Person of Christ. Once again, let me emphasize that these terms refer to Christ’s humanity. They apply to Him AFTER He entered into the world, being applicable now, and in the world to come. His identity with us is as one of us – both now and then. However, as a man His primary relationship is with God the Father. This is found throughout the Scriptures.

The frequency of these references to Christ’s Manhood are abundant – and all of them are under the primary relationship He has with the Father. None of these references refer to Jesus in His pre-incarnate state, when He was “the Word,” was “with God, and was God” (John 1:1).

1. “Son of GOD” – 47 times.
2. “Son of the Living GOD” – 2 times.

3. "Son of the HIGHEST" – 1 time.
4. "Son of the most high GOD" – 1 time.
5. "Son of the BLESSED" – 1 time.
6. "Only begotten SON" – 4 times.
7. "HIS Son" – 14 times.
8. "HIS Son Jesus" – 7 times.
9. "His own Son" – 2 times.
10. "HIS dear Son" – 1 time.
11. "The SON" – 13 times.
12. "Beloved SON" – 7 times.
13. "MY Son" – 3 times.
14. "A SON" – 2 times.

15. “SON of Man” – 88 times.

16. “JESUS” – 980 times.

17. “CHRIST” – 555 times.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 21

PREACHED AMONG YOU

“ . . . who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus . . . ”

Paul now extends himself to remind the Corinthians of the substance of his preaching. They had not been subject to spiritual fluff, and therefore their meager spiritual condition was inexcusable. Paul had not preached himself, and therefore it was

absurd for them to be questioning His Apostleship and doubting what he had said. He had preached the message through which God works – the message that is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). If, therefore, their views and conduct were deficient, it was owing to their own unbelief, not the Gospel that Paul preached. Later he will confirm this by saying, “You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections” (2 Cor 6:12, NKJV).

WHO WAS PREACHED

“ . . . who was preached among you . . . ” Other versions read, “whom we proclaimed among you” (NRSV), “whom we were preaching” (BBE), “who has been preached” (DARBY).

Paul now comes to the heart of his argument. “The Son of God, Jesus Christ,” was the sum and substance of His preaching. His purpose was to clarify and expound Christ Jesus and His accomplishments. It is as though everything he declared was in a sort of mathematical column, the sum of which was Jesus. In other words, everything that he preached was immediately associated with Jesus, and nothing that he preached was disassociated from Him.

It is arresting to consider how little of Jesus is really being preached these days. More is being said about what men have not done and ought to do than is being declared about the Savior of men. While various attempts are made to justify this kind of preaching, they are not sufficient to justify a Christless emphasis.

These days there are different thrusts in preaching. Some make a

choice to emphasize reform. Others place the stress on marriage. Still others shine the spotlight on unity. Others place the accent on prayer, and others on fasting. Obedience is the accentuation of others, while still others see the most important thing as feeding the poor. These preachers are teachers often things like, “the secret to pleasing God is . . .” Or, “This is what it is all about.” Some are of the persuasion that all of these work together as a harmonious whole. But Jesus is strangely absent from all of these emphases. If He is mentioned at all, it is something like sprinkling a little seasoning on something to bring out the taste of something else.

The lamentable truth about the matter is that a significant percentage of the preachers and teachers of our time do not see enough in Jesus to dominate their preaching for several months, to say nothing of a lifetime.

By way of comparison, the Scriptures relate what holy men preached.

1. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and “preached Christ” (Acts 8:5).

2. When converted, Saul of Tarsus “preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

3. Paul told the Corinthians he “preached Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 1:23).

4. Early in the history of the church, the Apostles “ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

5. In Thessalonica, Paul opened and alleged “that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:3).

6. Later Paul reaffirmed to the Corinthians, “we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2 Cor 4:5).

7. Paul referred to the Gospel as “the preaching of Jesus” (Rom 16:25).

8. Paul told the Ephesians that he preached “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8).

9. Proper preaching is said to be “Christ,” who in us constitutes “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27-28).

10. Paul came “preaching the Gospel of Christ” (2 Cor 10:14).

Here is something that cannot be overstated: proper preaching centers in, and finds its summation in, the Lord Jesus Christ! It is wrong to preach anything that detracts from Christ, distorts our view of Him, or makes Him seem irrelevant. If we end up talking about anything more than Jesus, or placing our stress upon anything other than Jesus, we are immediately on the broad road that leads to destruction.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 22

PONDERING WHAT IS SAID OF CHRIST

Ponder some of the things that are said of Christ. It will confirm that every good and perfect gift, and all blessing, hinges upon Him, and Him alone.

1. HE IS OUR LIFE. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

2. HE IS OUR HOPE. “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27)

3. THE WAY, TRUTH, AND LIFE. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

4. OUR WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION. “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of

God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30).

5. OUR PEACE. “For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Eph 2:14).

6. THE BREAD OF LIFE. “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

7. OUR PROPITIATION. “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

8. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

9. THE MEANS OF ENTRANCE. “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

10. OUR SHEPHERD. “I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Those who emphasize a religious movement, however cherished it may be, are wrong. Those who place the stress upon the responsibilities of believers are not emphasizing the proper thing. If God has placed the accentuation upon Jesus, referring to the saving message as “the record He has given OF HIS SON” (1 John 5:10-11), and “the Gospel OF CHRIST” (Rom 1:16), who is the person who will dare to place the accent on anything or anyone else? Such a person is in eternal jeopardy!

Salvation can be no more sure to us than our perception of the Person of Christ. If we do not see Jesus clearly, we cannot have a proper view of salvation. Everything pertaining to life and godliness fits within the context of Jesus. Jesus Himself is the embodiment of the truth (John 14:6). It is He Himself who sheds light on everything else, whether Moses, the Prophets, the Gospel, or Apostolic doctrine.

If it is true that “the fulness of the Godhead” dwells “bodily” in Christ, and that this arrangement has “pleased” the living God (Col 1:17; 2:7), then nothing from God can be received apart from Christ Jesus.

All theological ignorance and error springs from a misapprehension of Christ. As strong as it may appear, you cannot be wrong in your doctrine unless you are wrong about Jesus. For example, distorted views of the return of Jesus come from a distorted view of the Person of Jesus. Erroneous conceptions of what is entailed in salvation are the result of erroneous views of the Captain of that salvation. Flawed views of the church are the offspring of flawed views of the One who is building that church.

Religious human tradition is developed when truth is separated from Jesus. It is Jesus Himself, or the view of Him that is gendered by faith, that breathes life into theology. Any religion, however cherished it may appear, that does not have its locus in the Person and accomplishments of Jesus, is dead. It cannot free us from sin, or bring us to God. It cannot foil the Tempter or obtain the blessing. It cannot rescue us from the power of darkness, or put us into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

You might say there are three cardinal points to sound theology. "The Son of God," "Jesus," and "Christ."

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Chapter 23

BY US

" . . . by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus . . . "

There is perfect consistency in the preaching of these three men, and Paul makes a point of it. It seems to me that he was establishing that his preaching was not absolutely unique to him.

This was the insinuation of some of his critics, and the outright charge of others. Their opposition was necessitated by the fact that they were preaching “another Jesus,” “another gospel,” and “another Spirit” (2 Cor 11:4). They did not declare the same Jesus that Paul preached. The gospel they had heard and received from other men was not the same as the gospel that Paul preached. The Spirit that was chronicled by these other men was not the same Spirit to which Paul referred in his preaching. To the factionists, this suggested that Paul was wrong, having, they imagined, adopted a private view of things that clashed with what was becoming generally accepted.

Paul, however shows that this was not a proper evaluation. He cites two other men that had preached precisely the same thing that he preached. In his first epistle to the Corinthians he also affirmed that Apollos was also in that class (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6,22; 4:6; 16:12). He even included Cephas, or Peter, and the other apostles (1 Cor 1:12).

1. Paul – the “apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13), and a “teacher of the Gentiles” (1 Tim 2:7). Here is a man noted for receiving “the abundance of revelations” (2 Cor 12:7), to whom God especially gave “knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph 3:3).

2. Silvanus – Generally understood to be “Silas,” which is the contracted form of that name. He was among the “chief men” of the early church (Acts 15:22), and was a “prophet” (Acts 15:32). Paul chose this man to journey with him following his breakup with Barnabas (Acts 15:40). He was prominent in preaching to the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:19) and joined Paul in writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Peter describes him as a “faithful brother” (1 Pet 5:12).

3. Timothy – Timothy was called to labor with Paul when rather young (Acts 16:1). He is described as a “yokefellow” (Rom 16:21), Paul’s “beloved son” (1 Cor 4:17), was called to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:15), and was described as one who “will naturally care for your state” (Phil 2:19).

Here was an Apostle (Paul, 2 Cor 1:1), a prophet (Silvanus, Acts 15:32), and an evangelist (Timothy, 2 Tim 4:5). Yet they all had the same message, laboring together harmoniously for the Lord. They stand as a noble example of the uniting power of “the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:13), and the effective working of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3). They confirm that Christ is not divided, and those who labor in Him are also undivided. May the Lord raise up such kindred and united spirits in our day. They are sorely needed.

John wrote of certain men who were once with them, but left. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19). John refers to these men as “antichrists.” They had a competing message that proclaimed another Jesus. Their message did not blend with that of the apostles. Rather than abandoning their message, they left that holy conclave to do their own thing – and it was not good.

By way of comparison, Paul points out that himself, Silvanus, and Timothy had preached the same thing. At the foundational and

implication levels, their messages were essentially the same. They lived out, and preached, the realities declared in the letter to the Ephesians. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph 4:1-6).

O, that such things were more prevalent in our day!

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Devotion 25 of 34

ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE "YEA," #1

" For all the promises of God in Him are yea . . . "

Paul now elaborates on the role of Jesus in the salvation of God.

He will affirm that life in Christ is not a mere routine, or disciplinary form of life. Rather, it is primarily the enjoyment of Divinely appointed benefits that are vouchsafed to men exclusively through “the Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

Do not take for granted that this is common knowledge among those wearing the name of Jesus. A considerable percentage of professing Christendom is neither proclaiming nor relying upon Jesus – a circumstance that began to creep into the church while the Apostles were still among men.

ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD IN HIM

“For all the promises of God in Him . . . ” Other versions read, “For in Him every one of God’s promises” (NRSV), and “whatever promises of God there are” (DARBY).

What are “the promises” to which this text refers? These are the “better promises” (Heb 8:6) related to the New Covenant, and associated with the coming Redeemer. They are the “exceeding great and precious promises” by which we become “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). They have to do with what God “promised” concerning the Gospel (Rom 1:2). They relate to “eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began” (Tit 1:2). In fact, the promises of which He speaks are summarized in this single promise: “And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

UNDER THE OLD COVENANT

There were promises attached to the Old Covenant itself. They did

not relate to the coming Savior, nor were they intended to be part of the New Covenant. The New Covenant was established upon “better promises” – “better” than those attending the Old Covenant.

First, the word “promises” is not found in Genesis through Malachi (KJV, NKJV, ASV, BBE, YLT). The NASB version uses the word “promises” one time: “Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass” (Josh 21:45). Here “promises” is translated from the Hebrew word “daw-bawr,” which means “a matter of thing that is spoken” (STRONG’S). This word is used 2,582 times in the Hebrew Scriptures (Genesis through Malachi), and rarely refers to a Divine commitment. It generally means something that God has said, whether a commandment (Gen 8:15-16), or of God simply “talking” with someone (Gen 17:3).

There were individual promises made during the Old Covenant – such as God promising a land to Israel (Num 14:40; Deut 9:28), the numerical increase of Israel (Deut 1:11; 12:20), and bringing Israel into the land of promise (Neh 9:23).

Under the Law, there were blessings that would be realized IF the Law was perfectly kept at all times, with no deviation from that perfection. They were quite extensive. If the people hearkened “diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day,” (Deut 28:1), the Lord would set the people “on high above all nations of the earth.” These blessings would come upon the people, overtaking them, IF they would “hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God” (Deut 28:2). They would be blessed in the city and in the field. A blessing would be upon the fruit of the body, the fruit of their cattle, the increase of the kine (oxen), the flocks of their

sheep, their basket and their store. They would be blessed coming in, and blessed going out (Deut 28:1-6). The Lord would smite their enemies (Deut 28:7). He would “command a blessing upon their storehouses, and all” they set their hand to do. He would bless them “in the land” which the Lord gave them, and “establish” them as a “holy people unto Himself, IF” they would “keep the commandments of the Lord,” and “walk in His ways” (Deut 28:8-10).

These blessings did not depend upon Jesus, but upon the perfect obedience of the people. They were never associated with a coming Savior, or a New Covenant – NEVER! Jesus never appealed to these promises as an incentive, and neither did the Apostles. These were not the “better promises” upon which the New Covenant was founded.

Those who hold out these promises to the people of God are in great error. All of them are centered in this world. None if them can transfer into glory. All of them become obsolete when one dies.

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IN HIM WAS “YEA”

“ . . . was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.”

NOT YEA AND NAY

“ . . . was not yea and nay . . . ” Other versions read, “was not Yes and No” (KJV), “did not become yea and nay” (DARBY), “was not: It is and It is not,” (DOUAY), and “was never Yes-and-No” (NJB).

The message that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy preached had no contradictions or inconsistencies in it. To put it another way, it started and ended with Christ Jesus. He is, after all, “the Beginning and the Ending” (Rev 1:8), “the Alpha and Omega” (Rev 21:6), “the First and the Last” (Rev 22:13), and “the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2). The work that God has “begun” in Christ will be “performed” in Him – and only in Him – until “the day of Christ” (Phil 1:6).

The Gospel does not announce a work that is started by Christ and finished by us. It does not herald something that is started by us and finished by God. From beginning to end “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9; Psa 37:39). It belongs to Him (Psa 3:8), and “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Salvation is not partly by grace and partly by Law. At the foundational level, it is not a mixture of faith and works. It is not for some sinners, yet not for others. It does not announce benefits for men, but not for women, or advantages for the Jew, but not for the Greek. It does not announce blessings for masters, but not for slaves. The Holy Spirit is not given to some who are in Christ Jesus, but not to others. The message is not “Yes and No.”

IN HIM WAS YEA

“ . . . but in Him was yea.” Other versions read, “but in Him was Yes” (NKJV), “but is Yes in Him” (NASB), “but in Him it has always been ‘Yes,’” NIV “but in Him is always Yes,” NRSV “but It is, was in Him,” DOUAY “He is the Divine Yes – God’s affirmation” (NLT), and “but in Him it hath become Yes” (YLT).

“The Son of God, Jesus Christ” is the Door of entrance to every blessing from God. He, and He alone, is the Divinely appointed Means to salvation in all of its facets. Through Him, the Gospel does not announce some things that you can have, and some things you cannot have. It is true, there are things that are “not” to be touched (2 Cor 6:17) – but that is not the message of the Gospel of Christ!

The Good News is NOT “touch not, taste not, handle not” (Col 2:20-21). It is the word of a “better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6), not better prohibitions. It does not offer a license to sin, to be sure. However, the Law deals with sin, the Gospel announces remission and righteousness. The “power of God unto salvation” does not announce what God does not offer, but what He does offer.

When Jesus first proclaimed His mission, it was not a “Yes and No” message. Opening the Scripture, He found the place that most precisely declared His mission. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). That is essentially a “YES” message, and it is glorious! It announces what can be gloriously possessed!

Because of the way some people think, it is necessary to affirm that there are prohibitions, and they are to be taken seriously (Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:11,18; 2 Thess 3:13; Heb 6:12; 1 John 2:15-17). But those prohibitions are not the Gospel, nor are they a part of the Gospel. Everything that is essential is not Gospel. Further, there is no “power unto salvation” in prohibition or “Thou shalt not.” No person who ignores those prohibitions will be received into glory. The “power” that gets them there, however, will be found in the Gospel (Rom 1:16), which is essentially a “YES!” message.

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Chapter 25

ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE “YEA,” #1

“ For all the promises of God in Him are yea . . . ”

Paul now elaborates on the role of Jesus in the salvation of God. He will affirm that life in Christ is not a mere routine, or disciplinary form of life. Rather, it is primarily the enjoyment of Divinely appointed benefits that are vouchsafed to men exclusively through “the Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

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Chapter 26

It is written of Jesus and the new covenant, “But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” (Heb 8:6)

SOME OF THE BETTER PROMISES

Prior to Christ, many of these “better promises” were given. They were not tied to the Old Covenant, but spoke of a time that would follow the era of the Old Covenant. None of these promises were realized prior to Christ coming into the world, suffering death, being raised from the dead, ascending into heaven, and being

enthroned at the “right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3).

1. The people would hearken, or pay attention, to the real Prophet, Jesus Christ – “unto Him ye WILL hearken” (Deut 18:15).

2. The Lord would circumcise the heart of the people in order that they would love Him, thereby making them different – “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul” (Deut 30:6).

3. God would give them a new heart and a new spirit, thereby changing their motivations – “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezek 36:26).

4. They would walk in His statutes and keep His judgments, being noted for their obedience – “And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them” (Ezek 36:27).

5. His laws would be written on their hearts and put into their minds, causing them to be in fundamental agreement with God – “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer 31:33).

6. Their stony heart would be removed, and they would receive a heart of flesh, making them to be noted for tenderness instead of hardness and rebellion – “and I will take away the stony heart out

of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek 36:26).

7. They would have one heart, producing undeniable unity among them – “And I will give them one heart” (Ezek 11:19).

8. God would put His Spirit in the people, and cause them to walk in His statutes – “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek 36:27).

9. They would all know the Lord, being acquainted with His Person and ways – “they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:34).

10. Because of their cognition of their salvation, they would obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing would flee away – “And the ransomed of the LORD . . . shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa 35:10).

11. They would have a heart to know Him, preferring Him above all else – “And I will give them an heart to know me” (Jer 24:7).

12. They would have a pure language, and serve the Lord with one consent, not borrowing from the world, and living in the wrong direction – “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent” (Zeph 3:9).

13. Their eyes would not be dim, and their ears would hearken, making them perceptive of the things of God – “And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken” (Isa 32:3).

14. The heart of the rash would understand, and the tongue of the stammers would be ready to speak plainly, giving them the ability to express themselves properly – “The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly” (Isa 32:4).

15. With joy they would draw water out of the wells of salvation, rejoicing in their acceptance by God – “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isa 12:3).

16. There would come a time when salvation and safety would be realized – “In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6).

17. A Divinely appointed exchange program would be put into place – “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the

planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” (Isa 61:1-3).

18. The sins and iniquities of the people would no more be remembered – “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12).

19. A righteousness would be given by God to people, so that no condemnation of them would be possible – “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD” (Isa 54:17).

None of these promises were contingent upon keeping the Law. All of them would be realized in the coming Messiah, or Anointed One. There is no such thing as a “saved” person in whom these promises are not realized.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

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Chapter 27

ARE YEA

“ . . . For all the promises of God in Him are yea . . . ” Other versions read, “are Yes” (NKJV), “is a ‘Yes” (NRSV), “find their Yes in Him” (RSV), “made certain and put into effect,” (BBE), and “have been fulfilled in Him” (NLT).

The “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet 1:4) promises of God, are all “YES” in Christ Jesus. “All the promises of God” begin with the promise of the conquering Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), and conclude with the second to the last verse in the Bible: “Surely I come quickly” (Rev 22:20). All of them accrue to us in Christ Jesus. None of them are excluded for those who are in fellowship with the Son of God.

These promises are to be possessed and enjoyed in Him. When Jesus is “received” (John 1:12), these promises are also received. Their fulfillment is realized by those in whom Christ dwells by faith (Eph 3:17). None of them are contingent upon flawless obedience to the Law. All of them are dependent upon faith, for Christ dwells in our hearts “by faith.”

PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE

The unchangeable purpose of God is to conform us to the image of His Son – thus becoming partakers of the Divine nature (Rom 8:29). On a practical level, this purpose is realized by means of the promises of God – the ones that are “Yes” in the “Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

This is categorically stated by Peter, and with great pungency.

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that BY THESE ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 1:4). Other versions read, “through these” (NKJV), “by them” (NASB), and “through them” (NIV). That is, the promises are the appointed means through which we “participate in the Divine nature” (NIV), or become more and more like Jesus.

When Jesus addressed the seven churches in Asia, He gave them some “exceeding great and precious promises” – precious incentives through which they could be conformed to His image.

1. “Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10).

2. “He that overcometh will not be hurt of the second death” (Rev 2:11).

3. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev 2:17).

4. “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star” (Rev 2:26-28).

5. “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels” (Rev 3:5).

6. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name” (Rev 3:12).

7. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (Rev 3:20).

8. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev 3:21).

9. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Rev 21:7).

Ponder the exceeding great and precious promises that Jesus gave the beatitudes.

1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for THEIRS IS the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3).

2. “Blessed are they that mourn: for THEY SHALL BE comforted”
(Matt 5:4).

3. “Blessed are the meek: for THEY SHALL inherit the earth”
(Matt 5:5).

4. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after
righteousness: for THEY SHALL BE filled” (Matt 5:6).

5. “Blessed are the merciful: for THEY SHALL obtain mercy”
(Matt 5:7).

6. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for THEY SHALL see God”
(Matt 5:8).

7. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for THEY SHALL be called the
children of God” (Matt 5:9).

8. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:
for THEIRS IS the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:10).

9. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for GREAT IS your reward in
heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”
(Matt 5:12).

Those who take these promises seriously will realize their fulfillment, for they are all “YES” in Christ Jesus.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 28

FULFILLED IN CHRIST

All of the promises of God are actually realized in Christ. It is not that they CAN be fulfilled – they ARE fulfilled: i.e. they are “YES!” To the degree that we enjoy the fellowship with Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9), we will also enjoy the promises that are “Yes” in Him. When we have been “baptized into Christ” (Gal 3:27), all of the promises become “Yes!” When we have been “joined unto the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), “all the promises of God” become ours. When we have been put into Christ by God (1 Cor 1:30), the “exceedingly great and precious promises” (2 Pet 1:4) belong to us. That is the teaching of this passage.

These promises are “in Christ” – that is the locus in which they are confined. The actual realization of them comes through our faith, which is the appointed means of obtaining all of the benefits of the New Covenant. Living by faith ((Heb 10:38) is living in the

domain of the promises. Walking by faith is walking the realm filled with Divine commitment. Strictly speaking, the promises of God are not fulfilled in us because we do the right thing, but because we are in Christ – and we are children of God “by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal; 3:26). Jesus spoke of those who consider their works to qualify them for residence in His eternal kingdom. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt 7:22-23). That is quite a boast, that Jesus says some will present to Him. But it will be a completely erroneous statement, because He, according to His own statement, “never knew” them. There was never a real connection between them and Him, so all of their religious efforts, although very impressive, were utterly worthless. That is a sobering fact.

If Christ is shoved into the background of our thinking, or if faith is not kept and fought to maintain, the “promises of God” fade from view, and no longer are a prominent part of thought or objective. Rather than earnestly seeking to appropriate what God has promised, the individual becomes absorbed with his own ideas and objectives, imagining that God will be impressed by what they are doing. Oh, they may not say it in those words, but that is what they think. It is why they identify themselves by some profession of faith. However, their pretension has so anesthetized their conscience that they never consider the day of judgment when they will stand before the Lord.

AN EXPLANATION

I will wax bold and affirm that this explains the condition of countless churches, where disinterest in the things of God prevails

and “the flesh” sits upon the throne of human affection and objective. This explains the penchant for brevity and infrequency. It sheds light on spiritual shallowness, and the state of prevailing spiritual immaturity. This is why immorality has crept into the church, and the spirit of entertainment has captured the attention of the people.

If people are not participating in the Divine nature, it is because God’s “exceeding great and precious promises” are not in the foreground of their thinking. We know this is the case, because those promises are the appointed means of participating (NIV), or sharing (NLT), in the Divine nature. As it is written, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 1:4).

We further know that all of those promises are “YES” in Christ Jesus, so that none of them are out of reach to those who live by faith (Heb 10:38), walking in the light (1 John 1:7), and in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). Knowing this, it is no wonder that Paul spoke of the “deep concern for all the churches” which came upon him “daily” (2 Cor 11:28, NKJV). The apostle to the Gentiles said that this same kind of interest existed in faithful Timothy. Even back then, leaders had arisen in the church who were consumed with their own interests, and not that of the flock. “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's” (Phil 2:19-21).

Oh, for men of the spiritual caliber of Timothy, whose natural inclinations were for the state of the church. Such men will apprise

the church of the promises of God through which they participate in the Divine nature.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 29

THE PROMISES MUST BE DECLARED

"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet 1:3-4).

Peter’s salient statement blends well with our text. He reminds us that God, in a magnificent display of His grace, has “given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” – everything that is required to sustain spiritual life (John 10:10), fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and acceptance by God (Eph 1:4). There is no Divine requirement for which adequate provisions have not been supplied by God – not so much as one. From taking up our cross daily (Lk 9:23) and setting our affection on things above (Col 3:1-

2), to putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:10-18) and resisting the devil (1 Pet 5:8-9; James 4:7), our God has provided everything that is needed by His children. What they need to be holy has been supplied (1 Pet 1:15-26). What they need to perfect holiness has been given (2 Cor 7:1). Everything required to run the race (Heb 12:1-2), fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), and go on to perfection (Heb 6:1) has been supplied in abundance. These resources have been provided out of the Sovereign traits of glory and virtue – the manifestation of His Person and His integrity and faithfulness. Peter also states that God has called us into the realm where these blessed provisions are found. This parallels Paul’s statements that affirm, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3), and "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

We thus conclude that salvation includes the provision of everything required to obtain it and maintain it. Further, it is God who has called us into the experience of salvation, as well as the access to what He has graciously provided.

Peter then affirms that the same glory and virtue by which we have been called has also given us transcendent promises, that are now the means through which we come to “participate in the Divine nature” (NIV). That participation is another view of what Paul declared of life in Christ Jesus: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Being “conformed to the image of His Son” equates to being “made partakers of the Divine nature.” The One who does this work is God, and the means through which He does it is His promises.

If it is true that we become partakers of the Divine nature by means of the promises of God, then

they are to be placed clearly before the people. If “all of the promises of God are in Him ‘YES,’” then they are to be proclaimed with power from the housetops. These incentives must not be withheld from the people. To do so is to deprive them of the appointed means by which they will be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Such deprivation causes life to be an unbearable burden.

While it is never wrong to proclaim everything God requires of the people, it is a sin of staggering proportions to fail to make clear to them the means through which those requirements may be met – THE PROMISES. These “promises” declare what God has revealed He will do to and for those who are in the Son. They set before the people the outcome of life in Christ Jesus, the goal toward which they are running, and the object of the hope by which they are being saved (Rom 8:24-25). These shape our thoughts concerning where God is going with salvation, defining His objectives.

Those who dwell on what God has said about the result of Christ’s work, and the eternal destiny of those who are in Him, will find powerful incentives being formed in them. In Christ they have been created to obtain what God has promised. That is the kind of nature that has been birthed in them. It is a serious transgression when pretentious preachers and teachers busy themselves in resolving the problems of professing Christians, yet leaving them unprepared for eternity. If the message being delivered to the people does not assist them in preparing for death and judgment – Divine appointments (Heb 9:27) – and ready them to make the transition from time to eternity, it has done little or nothing for the

people. If the word that is being declared does not speak of eternal advantage, and does not remind the people of what God has promised they will be, it is pointless.

God is not building an institution designed to impress men, but a holy habitation that He Himself will occupy. As it is written, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto AN HOLY TEMPLE in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an HABITATION OF GOD through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22).

Ultimately, the aim is to fulfill this word: “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev 21:3).

The promises of God are all about readying the saints of God for that grand consummation. Blessed is the person who declares them, and cursed will be the one who does not.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 30

ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE “AMEN”

“ . . . and in him Amen . . . ” Other versions read, “wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us” (NKJV), “And so through Him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God” (NASB), “For this reason it is through Him that we say the ‘Amen,’ to the glory of God” (NRSV), “That is why we utter the Amen through Him, to the glory of God,” (RSV), and “That is why we say ‘Amen’ when we give glory to God through Christ” (NLT).

“YES” is what God says to us. “AMEN” is what we say to God – and both are “in Christ.” Both the dialog and the experiences are only “in Him.” Outside of Christ, or apart from fellowship with Him, we can never be assured that “all the promises of God” are for us. And, part from being in fellowship with “the Son of God, Jesus Christ,” we are not capable of saying the responsive “Amen” to God. Christ Jesus is the door through which everything from God comes to us, and everything from us goes to God.

The word “Amen” means “firm, faithful, surely, and truly” (STRONG’S). At the beginning of a sentence it means “surely, of a truth, truly” (THAYER). In the Gospel of John, a double usage of this word occurs twenty-five times. This double use is translated “Verily, verily” in the KJV. Other versions translate this double use “Most assuredly” (NKJV), “Truly, truly” (NASB), “I tell you the truth” (NIV), “Verily, truly” (NRSV), and “Amen, amen” (DARBY/NAB). This is a word of certainty, persuasion, and firmness.

At the close of a sentence the word “Amen” means “so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled” (THAYER). It carries the idea of “this is indeed true,” and “that is the way it should be” (ROBERTSON). I was once admonished by a Bible College president not to say “Amen” in the chapel services, because it appeared as though I was being selective in saying it. Of course, that is the very reason “Amen” is said – it attests to the truth of what has been said. I told the man I refused to do what he said.

Under the Old Covenant, some oaths were confirmed by saying “Amen, amen” (Num 5:22; Neh 8:6). When the curses of the Law were read, all of the people were to say “Amen” following each one of them (Deut 27:15-26). The expression “Amen and amen” is found in the Psalms (Psa 41:13; 72:19; 89:52). When David brought the ark of God back, and blessed God with insightful words, “all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord” (1 Chron 16:36). When Nehemiah restored godly practices, taking an oath from the people, He called God to witness the solemn occasion. Following his sobering words, “all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord” (Neh 5:13). When Ezra blessed the Lord during the renewal of that time, the people answered, “Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands” (Neh 8:6). “Amen” is a word rich with Scriptural glory.

Jesus Himself is called “the Amen, the faithful and true witness” in Revelation 3:14. That is, He is the embodiment of faithfulness and certainty.

In this text, this is a word that speaks not only of certainty, but of certitude that is perceived, and with which the individual joyfully

acquiesces.

The meaning is that God has made all of the promises certain in Christ Jesus. They are actually fulfilled in Him – in fact, there is no chance that they will not be fulfilled in Him. It is therefore our duty to concur with that certainty, and heartily embrace the promises. As we do this, the “Amen” will come from our hearts and lips. The “Amen,” however, is uttered “in Him,” which is Christ. It is out of our fellowship with Him what we utter our “Amen” to God. This is not a mere formality.

We will find the promises are everything God said they were, and more. None of the promises of God are overstated. Once realized to any measurable degree, none of them produce disappointment or dissatisfaction. The soul that tastes of the Lord will, indeed, find Him to be “good” (Psa 34:8). Believers find that what God has promised is precisely true. The promises prove to be a pledge of the even greater promises that are to be fulfilled in the world to come. There is an “eternal inheritance” that is as sure in the next world as justification is in this one.

What is more, there is an appointed association between our present justification and receiving our future inheritance. The more we ponder the inheritance, the more precious justification becomes. The more we consider our justification, the more we long for the inheritance. That is one of the ways we say “Amen” to the promises.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 31

UNTO THE GLORY OF GOD

“ . . . unto the glory of God by us.” Other versions read, “to the glory of God through us” (NKJV), “is spoken by us to the glory of God” (NIV), “goes through Him to God for glory

” (NAB), and “We answer ‘Amen’ to give praise to God” (NJB).

While the redeemed are the recipients of the promises, the ultimate glory does not go to them. Salvation is, in fact, an economy of glory – Divine glory. When sin entered into the world, man not only entered into a condition described as coming “short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), he became incapable of properly returning glory back to God. Apart from His own working within men, God is not glorified by humanity. Outside of Christ, all men are in a state of enmity against God – hostility and alienation. It is only when Christ receives us that we can bring true glory to the Father in heaven. As it is written, “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom 15:7).

Now, in Christ Jesus, we are enabled to “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). That is, God becomes evident in what we do –

evident to angelic hosts, and to those who have the knowledge of God in the earth.

THE GLORY OF GOD

The stimuli for this glory are the promises of God. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through Him [Christ] that we utter our Amen to God for his glory” (ESV). No more glory is brought to God than when His exceeding great and precious promises are appropriated. Such an appropriation justifies God by demonstrating His truthfulness and faithfulness.

SETTING TO ONE’S SEAL

Speaking of this facet of the kingdom, Jesus said this of the person who received His testimony. “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). Other versions read, “has certified that God is true” (NKJV), “sets his seal to this, that God is true” (RSV), “has made clear his faith that God is true” (BBE), and “attesting that God is true” (NJB).

In this text, Christ was extolling the virtue of men believing His own testimony, and doing so when it was not popular to do so. As a general rule, “no man” was receiving His testimony. The religious leaders, of whom Nicodemus was one, did not believe Jesus was the Christ. Later it would be confirmed that the majority of the multitudes were willing to follow Him for food – but not because they comprehended who is really was (John 6:26). The multitudes “wondered,” or marveled, when they saw His wondrous works (Matt 15:31). They acknowledged that no one ever spoke

like Jesus (John 7:46). However, the multitudes did not ask Him to explain the parables, like His disciples did (Matt 13:36; 15:15; Mk 7:17). They did not inquire concerning His teachings, as did His disciples (Matt 24:3). They were quite content to see His miracles, and casually hear His words, but were not willing to hang the whole of their lives upon what He said.

To His own generation, Jesus was a sort of religious novelty. We know this is the case because “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). As Isaiah prophesied, “and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:2-3). Thus His own people, to whom He was sent, became His “betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:52).

However, even in that generation – a generation that will be condemned in the day of judgment (Matt 12:41,42; Lk 11:31,32) – there were some who dared to believe Jesus, “leave all,” and follow Him (Mk 10:28; Lk 5:11,28). They were few in number, as indicated by the post-ascension small number of one hundred and twenty that faithfully gathered together, waiting to be endued with power from on high (Acts 1:15). However, by their unwavering acceptance of what Jesus said, they “set their seal” to the veracity and faithfulness of Christ’s word. It was that bold action that opened the door of blessing to them personally.

In the language of our text, this is what brings glory to God! Saying “Amen” to the promises is like those hundred and twenty disciples who hung on to Christ’s words when others went their own ways. They were, in fact, saying “Amen” to what the Savior had said to them. They shaped their lives around His words. They altered their conduct to conform to His words. He had told them to

stay in Jerusalem until they were “endued with power from on high,” and they did! They said “Amen” to that word, and thus brought glory to God.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 32

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Let us get to the heart of the matter. The “promises of God” – all of them – are “YES” to those who are in Christ Jesus. The fact that He has made such wonderful commitments brings glory to God, confirming His love, mercy, and intention to do good unto His people. But that is not the glory that is intended by this affirmation. It is the “glory unto God BY US” that is the particular point. That is, the glory brought to Him when we are convinced of the truth of His promises and embrace them.

This is what those who lived by faith prior to Jesus did with the promises of a coming redemption. It is said of them, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”

(Heb 11:13). That persuasion and embracement moved them to change their posture in this world. From the time of their persuasion, they could no longer fit into this world. From the precise point at which they embraced the promises of God, they acknowledged they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Their response was their “Amen” to the promises, and it brought glory to God. They had perceived what God had promised!

I must wax bold at this point, and speak concerning the deplorable spiritual conditions that exist in our time. This is a time when the vast majority of professing Christendom is in a sad and deteriorated state. There is not much confession of being “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” and all insightful believers know it. Legion is the name of the lifeless churches in our land. That is why any congregation of fervent believers, whatever their size, stands out by sharp contrast.

Let it be clear that God is not glorified by this condition! The angels do not sing His praise because of a sanctuary that is packed from 11:00 AM until noon. They do not laud the Lord because of the popularity of “Christian” music, or the burgeoning growth of “Christian” schools. Heaven is not set to praising the God of all the earth because denomination “A” or “B” is the fastest growing of all religious sects. These things may spark a lot of interest among men, but they draw no attention from heaven.

Jesus said, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10). He did not say there was joy among this number when a name was added to the roll of a particular church. Joy breaks out among the angels when a person sees the rich promises of God regarding provision for sinners, and embraces those promises through

repentance. That is a person who says “Amen” to the promises of God, and God is glorified by his response. That “Amen” introduced a change of conduct, for repentance stands between the old life and the new life.

But what of a generation that does not say the “Amen” to God’s promises? What of those who insist on wearing Christ’s name, but have no interest in what has been promised to the children of God? Such people do not believe the promises, and that is why they are not willing to leave all to obtain them. It is possible that such people have not even heard the promises. If that is the case, the church will be judged for failing to articulate them, for it is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). If preachers, pastors, ministers, elders, etc., are not declaring the promises of God to the people, they are nothing more than imposters – educated and cultured or not! These are the kind of men of whom God said, “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” (Jer 14:14). And again, “Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD” (Jer 23:32).

Do not think for one moment that this is too strong! If we are made “partakers of the Divine nature” through God’s exceeding great and precious promises (2 Pet 1:4), what can be said of the supposed minister who does not set these promises before the people? If “all the promises of God are ‘Yes,’” what will God do with the preacher who never speaks of them? If God is glorified by the “Amen” that is shouted out to His promises, then what is the effect of the stony silence that prevails where those promises are

rarely, if ever, heard?

Does anyone imagine that God is glorified by a polished domestic or social culture that could be produced independently of faith in Christ and a solid persuasion of the truth of His promises? Is there a sound-minded person in all of the world who is willing to affirm such an absurdity?

Yet, this is the kind of thing that is being hawked among the people of God. Procedures and disciplines are being promoted that have supplanted the “exceeding great and precious promises of God.” The consequence of it all is that the people are not being brought to say “Amen” to those promises, and thus God is not being glorified.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Chapter 33

THE PURPOSE IS GLORY TO GOD

The ultimate purpose of God is not the salvation of men. His purpose is His own glory, and salvation is the means of producing

that glory! The ultimate glory will occur when the insightful amalgamation of the redeemed, together with the multiplicity of heavenly hosts, cry out, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:10). And again, “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God” (Rev 19:1).

TO PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Right now, in this glorious “day of salvation,” God is bringing glory to Himself through His church – the ones who have embraced His rich promises. Of this activity it is written, “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: TO THE INTENT that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:9-11).

The embrace of the promises of God, and the consequent “Amen” that comes from the people, causes angelic hosts to see the wisdom of God more clearly. There are aspects of the wisdom of God that were not seen prior to the salvation of men. The context of that wisdom is the kindness, love, and grace of God – attributes of the Lord that are expounded most fully within the perimeter of His great salvation.

THE AGES TO COME

While glory is brought to God through the believers’ participation in His promises now, this is not the end of the matter. There are,

what the Scriptures call, “the ages to come.” There is an ultimate purpose for which God has accepted and elevated us in Christ Jesus. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: THAT in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-7).

The “ages to come” relate to “the world to come,” not this one. The premier effect of salvation will ripple throughout “the ages to come,” as a Divine pebble thrown into the ocean of Divine revelation.

Resident in this great salvation are manifestations of Divine glory that cannot be seen in any other Divine work. The extent to which they are revealed in Jesus, by grace, and in the Spirit, is unique. It is too big to be fully disclosed in “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). It is too large to be comprehended by those who remain in tabernacles of clay (2 Cor 4:7). Until Jesus is revealed in all of His magnificent glory, there are things about this “great salvation” that remain veiled. Therefore we read about a salvation that is “ready to be revealed” (1 Pet 1:5), grace that is to be “brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:13), and “the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19).

There is a “change” that will not occur until “the end” (1 Cor 15:51-52). We will not be fully “like Him” until we “see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-2). There is a “righteousness” for which we yet “hope” and are waiting (Gal 5:5), and a time when we “shall know even as also” we are “known” (1 Cor 13:12).

There is a lot more to the Divine agenda than what has taken place, is taking place, and will yet take place in this present world. There are “the ages to come” in which the glories of the salvation that is “in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” will be more fully expounded and more extensively seen. Now, in this world, as we lisp the “Amen” to God’s promises, He receives glory. However, both the “Amen” and the “glory” will be more pronounced in “the ages to come.”

THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY

The glory of God is what it is all about. Our own benefit, as marvelous as it is, is only the means by which that glory is brought into more sharp and extensive focus. It all begins “here,” but it will conclude “there.”

A picture of this is provided in the Epistle to the Ephesians. “That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:12-14).

Notice, it is the redeemed themselves who are to be to “the praise of His glory.” They are the “workmanship” (Eph 2:10) in which the glory of God is to be seen and praised. The perception of the finished product will provoke an unparalleled eruption of praise to God. It will be on a much larger scale than when the angelic hosts “shouted for joy” when the worlds were created (Job 38:7). It will

rise to greater heights than when the heavenly host broke forth in praise on night the “holy Child” was born (Lk 2:13-14). The “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Lk 15:10) will be but a faint whisper in comparison to the waves of glory that will reverberate throughout “the ages to come.”

Salvation is essentially an economy in which God is receiving, and will receive, glory and praise. He has not only invested Himself in this salvation, but is revealing Himself in it. Because it “pleased” God to have “all fulness” dwell in Christ Col 1:19), more of God, His will, and His purpose are perceived through the Savior. That fulness is especially perceived in His salvation – the salvation that is “with eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10), and of which the prophets prophesied (1 Pet 1:10). The salvation of God is exceedingly large.

To be even more precise, it is as we actually participate in that salvation, sounding the “Amen” to the exceeding great and precious promises that declare it, that this glory is now brought to God.

THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE NOT “YES AND “NO”

“But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

CONCLUSION

“Paul’s defense of his Apostleship is of a strictly spiritual order and dimension. He does not rush to the defense of his own person, but affirms the truth of what he has preached. It was a Gospel that was Christ-centered, not Paul-centered. Ultimately, it accrued to the glory of God, not the glory of Paul. It was a message through which the God of heaven worked. It was a message that was powerful in its effects, and glorious in its results.

Primarily, this Gospel is not a combination of blessings and curses, as was the Law (Deut 28). It does not place before us a series of “Yes and No” statements. The law set before the people “life and death, blessing and cursing” (Deut 30:19). It placed before the people “life and good, and death and evil” (Deut 30:15). Moses declared, “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known” (Deut 11:28).

While some have represented the Gospel as this sort of message, that is emphatically not the case. There is a word directed to those who do not believe, but it is not gospel! The Gospel is essentially “good news” (Prov 25:25) and “glad tidings” (Rom 10:15). It makes known “the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God” (Lk 8:1), and “glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled . . . in that He hath raised up Jesus again” (Acts 13:32-33). It is the announcement that God has “raised up His Son Jesus,” and “sent Him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26).

It is true, “he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk 16:16), and “he that believeth not is condemned already” (John 3:18). It is also true that the one who does not believe on the Son “shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). When Jesus is revealed from heaven in all of His glory, He will “take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:8). There is no question about this, and it is to be declared with certitude and conviction.

However, this is not the Gospel of Christ. It is not the essential message that has been given to the church. It is not the means God uses to effect His great salvation. The Gospel is essentially “YES!” When Jesus stood to announce His manifesto, He did not proclaim cursing, but blessing (Luke 4:18-20)! He went about preaching “the GOSPEL of the Kingdom” (Matt 4:23; 9:35). That was His all-important message!

Because of this circumstance, the Gospel accents the promises of God. Praise God, all of these promises are “YES” in Christ Jesus, and none of them are “NO!” May the Lord raise up labors who will deliver the message He has ordained.