

INTRODUCTION

We're on a journey through 2 Corinthians I'm calling "Hope for Cracked Pots." Today I want to speak on this topic: GOD'S FAVORITE WORD IS "YES!" One of the most beautiful words in the human language is the word "yes." Whenever a young man summons enough courage to ask a young lady to be his bride, there is only one word he wants hear: "yes!" When you apply for a job, you want to hear, "yes, you're hired." When you apply for a home mortgage, you want to hear, "yes, you've been approved." I can remember as a kid in school having my first crush on a girl named Sandra. I wrote her a note that said, "Dear Sandra, I like you, do you like me? Check yes or no. Like, David" She checked "yes!"

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

Let's try it today. "Will this be a boring sermon?" (Signs point to yes) Let's try again, "Will (name) stay awake during this message?" (Outlook not so good). Next, "Will the Mavs win the NBA championship this year?" (Signs point to yes). Will the Rangers win the World Series? (Don't count on it). Finally, will any of the Dallas Cowboys be arrested in the off season? (Yes-definitely). Maybe this thing does work!

On the other hand, we don't really like hear "no." From the time we were children we've learned to cringe when we heard the word, "no." When you were little and started to do something wrong, your mom or dad would shout, "no!" And Bill Cosby says that the no's get louder and faster as they get closer to you to grab you, "No! No no no no no no ... I said no!" Or when you got a little older and wanted to go somewhere with your friends, but your parents said, "no, and that's final!" It's a bummer to hear, "no."

Sadly, many people conceive of God in the same negative terms. To them, God is a cosmic killjoy who watches from heaven just waiting to catch them doing something wrong. They imagine Him shaking His finger at people saying, "No! No! Bad person! Stop that right now!" But the God of the Bible isn't trying to spoil your fun by constantly telling you, "No!" God loves you and He wants you to enjoy life to the fullest. I believe that God's favorite word is, "Yes."

Before we read 2 Corinthians 1:12-20, let me give you a little information to help you understand this passage. There were some people in the church at Corinth who didn't like Paul. They claimed that he had broken his promises. Apparently, he had told told them that he would try to visit them on a certain trip. When his plans changed, some of his critics used his change of plans to accuse him of duplicity and deceit - and they even cast doubt on the message of Christ that he preached. So if these words sound like Paul is defending himself, he is. But Paul uses this dispute to declare the "yes" of God's promises. With that background, let's read our text: Now

here is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus. Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner, so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"? But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Like Paul, we should be careful about making promises that we might not be able to keep because people might say that our yes is no and our no is yes. But for this message, we'll ignore Paul's travel plans and focus on one tremendous truth: For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

How many promises do you think God has made? There's a little devotional book called "A Promise a Day" that contains 365 promises of God - one for each day of a year. But God has made many more promises than one-a-day. Herbert Lockyer wrote a book entitled, *All the Promises in the Bible*, in which he found 7,457 promises of God in the Bible! And our text tells us that Jesus is the "yes" to every single promise of God. That's 7,457 times the Bible says, "Yes!"

Because Jesus is the "YES!" to every promise of God, we respond by saying "amen" to the glory of God. I think it's a good thing to say, "Amen." The word literally means, "so be it." or "right on!" Of all the words in the human language, there are two words that are the same in every language: hallelujah (which means "praise the Lord") and amen. "Amen" is such a great word that it should be used for other purposes than merely ending a prayer.

In 1958 Arnold Palmer was on his way to winning the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, Georgia. After Sunday's final round, sportswriter Herbert Warren Wind wrote an article for *Sports Illustrated* in which he remarked on how well Palmer had played the difficult three holes 11, 12, and 13. In the article, Wind first called that part of the course the "Amen Corner." That name stuck and since that day, that section of Augusta National has become famous as the "amen corner."

But the actual term "amen corner" goes all the way back to England. There is an "Amen corner" outside St. Paul's Cathedral where people used to gather and pray. Beyond that, there used to be a corner in New York City at 5th Avenue and Madison Gardens where street preachers and other speakers would gather to shout their message. If listeners agreed they would shout, "Amen!" That's how that location became known as "Amen Corner." And if you may remember a time when there used to be an "amen pew" that was sometimes called an amen corner. It was a place where some of the more excitable listeners would sit to agree with the preacher with shouts

of "Amen, brother, preach it!" I like it when someone shouts, "Amen!" It's like saying, "sic 'em" to a dog. Now according to this scripture, Jesus is the "yes" but, we're the ones who say, "Amen!" So, we're going to do that today. Whenever I say, "Yes!" in a certain way, I want you to say, "Amen!" Let's try it: "Yes!" "Amen!" Come on. If you'll do this it'll help the time go faster. One more time: "Yes!" Amen! Okay, now you're ready. Have you ever wanted to ask God a question? Let's ask Him five quick questions, and then listen for His favorite word.

1. God, do you really love me?

And God's answer is: YES! Amen! One of the first songs I learned in Sunday School said, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world; Red and Yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." God loves all people everywhere. When anyone on the planet asks Him, "God do you love me?" they hear God's answer in their own language. A Spanish or Italian person hears God say, "Si." The German and Dutch hear God say, "Yah!" The French hear, "Oui!" The Chinese hears, "shi. The Japanese hear "Hai." The Russian hears, "Da!" The West Texan rancher hears, "yup!" The Minnesotan hears, "You betcha!" The teenage girl hears, "(grunt) like yeah!" To the golfer, God says, "Yes!" (Fist pump). To the basketball fan, God says, "Yeah, baby!" To the Beatles fan God says, "I love you, Yeah, yeah, yeah. With a love like that you know you should be glad! " Yes! Amen!

If you need proof that God loves you, just look at the cross. The night before Jesus was crucified He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) God loves you so much that if you had been the only person needing a Savior, Jesus would have gone to the cross to die for you. God's love for you is unconditional. He doesn't love you IF you act a certain way, He loves you with a complete love based on His loving character rather than on than anything we've done. God doesn't love you because you deserve it. God loves you because it's His nature to love you. God, do you really love me? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!

2. God, can you forgive all my mistakes? YES! Amen!

Each of us stands guilty as a sinner before a Holy God. But instead of judging us on the basis of our sins, God, who is rich in mercy and full of grace, offers us a full and free pardon. Again, the proof of God's forgiveness is seen at the cross. It is through the death of Jesus on the cross that the guilt of our sin is removed. The Bible says, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin." (1 John 1:7)

One of the statements I've made several times about God's amazing grace is that through the blood of Jesus, God forgives ALL your sins - past, present, and future. Now, most people don't have any trouble believing that God can forgive our past sins, but they have a little trouble accepting that the blood of Jesus also forgives all their future sins. If you struggle with that concept, here's something for you to consider: When Jesus died on the cross 2,000 years ago, He forgave all your sins - and at that time, they were ALL future! Because God has forgiven you, then you should forgive yourself and be willing to forgive others.

You've probably heard the wonderful story behind the hymn "It is well with my soul." Horatio G. Spafford was an American lawyer in the 1800's whose wife and daughters were on a ship that encountered a storm and sank in the Atlantic Ocean. Only his wife survived. Mr. Spafford quickly caught a ship to England to join his heartbroken wife. On the voyage, at the very spot where his daughters drowned, he penned those moving words, "When peace like a river attendeth my way; when sorrows like sea billows roll ..." I can just visualize him standing on the deck of that ship entrusting his grief to His Father. But my favorite verse in that hymn is the third verse. Perhaps as Mr. Spafford gazed at the deep ocean he thought about the promise of God to "hurl all our iniquities in the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19) The third verse of that hymn expresses the same wonder of my heart when I sing, "My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin not in part, but the whole; Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more; Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Oh my soul!" Brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoice because God has buried all your sins in the ocean depths of His grace and forgiveness. As one preacher put it, God sunk your sins in the sea and put a "no fishing" sign there!

3. God, do you have a plan for my life? YES!

Amen! At about this point you may be thinking, "Wait a minute, Pastor, God doesn't ALWAYS say 'yes' sometimes He says "no." You're right, and there are verses in the Bible where God says, "No, don't do that." But like any good parent, God says "no" in the context of the greater good. In other words, He says, "No" to something painful so that He can say, "yes" to something wonderful. He says, "no" to the lesser so that He can say, "yes" to the better.

For instance, any good parent will say to their child, "No, don't stick that fork in the electrical outlet!" They aren't saying, "no" to curb their child's fun—but to protect them from harm. God does the same thing. Every time God says, "Don't do that" He is saying, "Don't hurt yourself. I have something much better in mind for you."

God has a plan for you and it can be described in two verses. First in Jeremiah 29:11 we read, "For I know the plans I have for you." declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Did you hear that? God wants the very best for you in this life and in the life to come. Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)

You may be thinking that your life is a mess, and it seems that God's plan for your life isn't working out very well right now. All I can say is that He isn't finished yet. Not everything that happens in life is good, but Roman 8:28 promises that if you love God and are one of His called ones, that He will work everything out for good.

Here's a simple illustration to help you understand the ultimate goodness of God's plan. Kids, years ago, women used their ovens for something other than storing potato chips! They would actually bake things in them - like a cake. If I offered you a cup of dry flour to eat, you'd say, "no thanks." If I offered you a couple of raw eggs, or a cup of sugar, or a cup of melted butter, you'd probably refuse them. But a knowledgeable cook can take this same unappetizing ingredients, mix them together, put them in a pan, pop them in an oven and voila! soon there's a tasty cake. God's plan for you is a lot like that. There are often some terrible, unappetizing things

that happen in our lives. But God can take the good, the bad, and the ugly and mix them up in the bowl of His blessedness, stir them up in the pan of His providence, and then pop them in to the oven of His omnipotence - and what you have is voila! A sweet tasty treat. The Bible says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8) Does God have a good plan for your life? Yes! Amen!

4. God, what do you want me to say to You? YES! Amen!

I believe one of the reasons why "yes" is God's favorite word is because He loves to hear us say that same word to Him. Chris Tomlin and Louie Giglio have called out a new generation of young people to radical Christianity. These young people have a passion for God to ignite a fire in their hearts to pursue Jesus and to spread His fame throughout the earth. They refer to themselves as Generation 268. That designation is based on the theme verse for the Passion Movement that is found in Isaiah 26:8. Listen to this yes-verse. "Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and your renown are the desires of our hearts." Will you make this "yes" the passion of your life?

When I heard about the terrible shooting at Virginia Tech, I felt like someone had punched me in the stomach. As soon as I heard about it I paused to pray for all the people touched by this terrible massacre. Then my mind went back to the shooting at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 in which fourteen students and one teacher died. You may recall that one of the students shot was a 17 year old girl named Cassie Bernall. Before becoming a Christian two years earlier Cassie had been a Goth girl preferring to wear black and even dabbling in the occult. Even after she became a Christian, she still tried to befriend and influence her Goth friends. She had long blonde hair, and just days before the attack she had told her aunt she was going to cut her hair short and donate it to a program that made wigs for kids who had undergone chemo. Although she was known as a quiet, she had a radiant smile, and everyone knew that her favorite movie was Braveheart.

When she faced death, Cassie demonstrated some amazing bravery herself. According to some friends who were in the library on that terrible Tuesday afternoon, one of the gunmen pointed a gun at Cassie and taunted her by asking, "Do you believe in God?" Cassie was terrified, but she said, "Yes." Those were her last words and a split second after the gunman pulled the trigger Cassie was ushered into eternity.

Based on her last words, her mother, Misty Bernall, wrote a best-selling book entitled, "She Said Yes: The Unlikely martyrdom of Cassie Bernall." Cassie's last word, "yes" has touched thousands of lives. She has inspired many people to say "yes" to God's call.

Just think about how God used people in the Bible who said "yes" to Him. Noah said, "Yes" to build a boat because God told him it was going to rain—and it had never rained a drop on earth before then! Abraham said, "Yes" to God's call to leave Ur and head west without a destination in mind. Then he said, "Yes" when God told him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Moses said "yes" at the burning bush to a God who is the great I am. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her she had been chosen by God to give birth to the Son of God, she humbly said, "Yes, Lord, let it be as You have said." And when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" He said, "Yes, Lord."

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

What is God calling you to do today? Is He calling you to attempt something so great that without His power it is doomed to failure? Don't be afraid, just say, "Yes, Lord!" His favorite word is: YES! Amen! Finally, let's ask Jesus, who is God, a question.

5. Jesus, are you coming back?

In order to answer this question, let's just read the final words of the Bible. In the last verse of the last page of the last book of the Bible Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming soon." And here's our word: "Amen! Come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:13)

There is a remarkable unity to the entire Bible that never ceases to amaze me. This is the last time that God says, "yes." And the first time God is recording saying "Yes" is in Genesis. He had promised Abraham years earlier that Sarah would bear him a son, and when God mentioned it again, Abraham literally fell down laughing. He said, "Right, God! I'm 100 and You're telling me that Sarah will bear a son at age 90? Ha! Ha!" That's when God first uttered His favorite word. He said in Genesis 17:19, "Yes, your wife, Sarah, will bear you a son, and you will name him laughter (Isaac)." I'd say God got the last laugh on that!

I say that because there are people today who scoff and laugh at the very idea of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Once again, God will have the last laugh. The last recorded words of Jesus in the Bible are these, "YES! I AM coming soon!" And all of us who know Him, and love Him, and love His appearing, we say "Amen!" Yes! Amen!

CONCLUSION

So what have we learned? Paul had made some plans that he couldn't keep. And we should be careful not to make promises we can't keep. We put our mouth in motion before our mind is in gear. Sometimes our mouths write checks that our body can't cash! As much as we try to keep promises, sometimes our "yes" becomes a "no."

And all of us have heard promises that were broken. When you hear a person say, "I promise," take it with a grain of salt. In this life you'll hear empty promises like, "this will only take a moment of your time;" "I'm not trying to sell you anything;" "this won't hurt a bit;" or "If I'm elected I will..." As much as we like to keep our promises sometimes we fail.

But all of God's promises are in Christ and they are rock solid. He says, "Yes! I love you unconditionally - I promise in Christ. Yes! I can forgive all your sins - I promise in Christ. Yes! I have a wonderful plan for your life - I promise in Christ!"

You can stand firm on God's promises. His promises never fail. When Peter walked on the water during the storm, he wasn't walking on water, He was walking on the Word of God spoken by Jesus. Jesus said, "Walk to me." When Peter started doubting he started sinking. You can't always stand on human promises—it's like trying to walk on water. But you can stand firm on God's promises because they are "yes in Christ." As the old hymn says, "Standing on the promises that cannot fail; when the howling storms of fear and doubt assail; By the living word of God I shall prevail! Standing on the promises of God." (Words by R. Kelso Carter).

E. Stanley Jones was a great missionary who spent most of his life taking the gospel to the people in India. At the age of 87 he suffered a crippling stroke that paralyzed the right side of his body. He could no longer preach so he simply said, "I can no longer preach a sermon - so I will BE a sermon." He trained himself to write with his left hand and he managed to talk out of the left side of his mouth. After his stroke, he managed to write the most important book of his life entitled, *The Divine Yes!* In it he wrote, "When I came to the autumn of my life, to this stroke which left me in shambles, I knew that the only Christian way to fall was to fall on my knees and thank God that though outwardly I am only a half person, in Him I am whole and well and the same person as before. I discovered that in this stroke, I had fallen, but I had fallen into the arms of Grace...I haven't read a thing in six months. I see but in a haze. My speech is thick and sometimes muddled. Yet I see that life is good. Jesus came that I might have life and have it abundantly. He is not only life, he is life with a Yes in it, the Divine Yes! (page 131-135) After reading that I think there are only two words needed to finish this message: "YES!" "Amen!"

OUTLINE

Focus Verse: For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God *2 Corinthians 1:20*

1. God, do you really love me? YES!

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." *John 15:13*

2. God, can you forgive all my mistakes? YES!

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

3. God, do you have a plan for my life? YES!

"For I know the plans I have for you." declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." *Jeremiah 29:11*

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." *John 14:2*

4. God, what do you want me to say to You? YES!

"Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and your renown are the desires of our hearts." *Isaiah 26:8*

5. Jesus, are you coming back? YES!

"Yes, I am coming soon." "Amen! Come Lord Jesus." *Revelation 22:13*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes