

2 Corinthians Chapter 2 the Dependableness of God

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the dependableness of God, highlighting His promises, grace, and salvation as sure and steadfast, and encouraging believers to trust in Him.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:20

Topics: "Trust in His Promises", "Dependability of God"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the dependability of God as highlighted in 2 Corinthians 1:20-22, where all of God's promises are affirmed in Christ. He addresses the criticism faced by the Apostle Paul regarding his trustworthiness, explaining that God's character is unwavering and His promises are fulfilled, regardless of human circumstances. Simpson illustrates that God's promises are varied, sure, and reassuring, and that His grace is stable and transformative in the lives of believers. He encourages the congregation to trust in God's faithfulness and to respond with 'Amen' to His promises, thereby glorifying God through their faith. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deep reliance on God's dependability as the foundation of a believer's life.

Transcript

"For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, is God: Who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1: 20-22.

There is no quality more valuable in people than dependableness. The late Dean Stanley once said, "Show me a young man who is utterly trustworthy, whose word is as good as his affidavit, who keeps his engagements and who can always be found at his post and depended upon to do his best, and I will show you a fragment from the Rock of Ages."

There is nothing more rare in officers of public trust and positions of responsibility and in private business than this quality of dependableness and trustworthiness, and it is counted of greater value than the most brilliant gifts and the most impulsive enthusiasm.

Now this is the aspect of the divine character the apostle brings out in the striking words of our text. His enemies at Corinth had just challenged his own trustworthiness. He had promised to visit them some time

before and failed to keep his appointment and they were saying that "his word was yea and nay." What tried him much more was that they were also ascribing the same uncertainty to the message which he had brought them and criticizing the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ as if quite as unreliable as the apostle's own promises.

He earnestly repudiates the reflection and explains that his failure to keep his appointment to visit them was prompted solely by their own interests. He had learned that they were in such a sad spiritual condition that a visit from him would have meant the severest censure and the deepest distress and pain for them and him. "I call God for a record," he says, "that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth," and then he adds in the next chapter, "I determined this with myself that I would not go to you again in heaviness."

So far therefore from a spirit of vacillation he was animated by the highest honor and affection. Then he proceeds to vindicate the Word of God from the more serious criticism which they had made against it. "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."

Not only so, but the work of His grace in fulfillment of His word is just as sure and steadfast as His promises, and so he goes on to say, "Now He which establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God who has also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

God, therefore, is not a changeable and uncertain Being, but One whose word is sure and whose work is enduring even as His everlasting throne. We have a God on whom we can utterly depend. We have a Savior who is truly "the Rock of Ages."

There is One amid all changes who standeth ever fast;

One who covers all the future, the present and the past;

It is Christ, the Rock of Ages, the First and the Last.

God's dependableness is unfolded in this verse in two respects, with reference to His promises and His grace.

I. The Promises of God

"All the promises of God in Him are yes and in Him amen." God never forgets His word. Long ago He promised a Redeemer and although He waited four thousand years, the promise was at last most surely fulfilled. He promised Abraham a son and although a quarter of a century of testing intervened, that promise at last came literally true. He promised Abraham the land of promise as his inheritance and although four hundred years of trial intervened, at last the land was possessed. He promised Jeremiah that after seventy years the captives should return from Babylon and on the very hour the action answered to the word. He promised Daniel that after sixty-nine prophetic weeks, that is 483 years, Messiah should appear, and at the very day the promise was fulfilled, and the most extraordinary evidence which we have to offer to the doubting Hebrew today that Jesus is his Messiah is the literal fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel at the exact date. The Lord Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit, and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. Just as true are all His individual promises to the believer. Not one jot or tittle shall fail until all shall be fulfilled. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."

Some very beautiful and striking things are taught us in this passage about the promises of God.

1. Their Variety. The literal translation of the pronoun "all" here is not only universal but particular, and has been rendered "all the promises of God, how many soever they be." It carries the idea of a great number and variety and yet notwithstanding their number and variety, every one is pure gold. When men talk much, the intrinsic value of their words depreciates. People of brief speech are usually people of surer performance, but God, although He has spoken to us more than forty thousand words of promise, never wearies of making good each one.

How many and varied they are. There are promises of salvation and they are more than can be numbered. There are promises of cleansing and sanctifying and keeping and they cover every possible spiritual condition. There are promises of healing and they meet every physical need. There are promises of comfort for the sorrowing as tender as the breathing of a mother's love. There are promises of deliverance for the tried and tempted that cover every danger of life's pathway. There are promises for our homes, our friends, our work, our financial and temporal needs and all possible conditions of life. They are repeated in every variety of phrase and fitted to encourage our timidity and inspire our faith and lead us out in confidence and prayer, and every one of them can be depended upon. Some of them take hold of us at one time and some at another. God has a thousand hands, but the touch of a single finger will bring us into the embrace of His everlasting arms.

2. The Surety. "They are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus." He has guaranteed them. The promises of God form a great check book and every one is endorsed by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His word and honor are pledged to their fulfillment. Indeed, they are all given to Him primarily as our federal Head and Representative. In the everlasting covenant, He undertook to fulfil the conditions of redemption and received in return all the promises of God. He has met those conditions, He has earned those promises, He has fulfilled that covenant; and now, for His sake, we can claim every one of them just as fully as if we had fulfilled the conditions ourselves.

3. The Reassurance. "Yes." Why is this added? "All the promises of God in Him are yes." Does it perhaps mean that God not only assures, but reassures? Not only does He give His promise in the Word, but He sends His Holy Spirit to whisper it personally in our hearts and awaken within us the spirit of confidence and trust.

Passing with a little child through a dark tunnel, the little one kept turning anxiously to the father and asking again and again, "Will we soon be through? Is it all right? Is there any danger?" And the father kept reassuring the anxious child and repeating his comforting "Yes." It is thus that the Father of mercies speaks in our troubled hearts. "Yes," he says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." When the apostle was troubled about his mysterious "thorn in the flesh" he asked the Lord again and again about it and the beautiful record he has given us of the answer is, "He kept saying unto me: My grace is sufficient for you."

It is thus that the Father repeats His loving words and breathes renewed consolations into the anxious and troubled heart until like the soothing of a mother with a sobbing child, we sink to rest in our Father's arms.

Perhaps, also, the "yesa" means the Lord Jesus Christ is God's answer to all other promises. Everything that God has told us is fulfilled in Him. He is the substance of all blessing, and the answer to all our need and therefore "all the promises of God in Him are yes."

4. The Response, "Amen." The "amen" is our answer to God's "yes." It is an act of faith by which we make the promises our own. When you receive a check from the bank, it is of no value until you first write your own name upon the back of it, and thus personally appropriate it to yourself. Then it becomes payable. So every promise of God must be subscribed by you and receive your "amen." It is our privilege to put our name in the promise. The pronouns "my" and "me" have a high place in the experience of faith and deeper Christian life.

This "amen" is also through Jesus Christ, "in Him amen." It is He who prompts and sustains and inspires our faith. We can never appropriate the promises ourselves but must take Him to work in us the effectual prayer and the faith which takes all that He is waiting to give. Not only does He give us His precious blood and His perfect righteousness, but His own faith too and in Him we are able to claim all the fulness of His grace.

5. The Glory of God. Our appropriating the promises redounds to the glory of God, and we honor Him most, not by showing Him how much we can do, but by showing how much He can do in us and for us. Every time we claim one of His promises, we illustrate to the heavenly powers as well as the world around us the resources and sufficiency of our God, and we shed more glory upon His name and the victorious work of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants us to be living witnesses, proving to the world, not only His almightiness but His dependableness, so that as others see what He has become to us, they will learn to trust Him also.

II. God's Grace

The apostle next proceeds to show the stability of God's grace and gracious work in the hearts of His people.

1. Its Stability. "Now He which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God." The salvation He offers us is not a state of probation, but an everlasting insurance. "I give unto them eternal life, he says, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "He that has begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Therefore He purposes not only to forgive our past transgressions, but to establish us by working out in our inmost being all the fulness of His grace.

The process of establishing includes all the provisions of His Holy Spirit and all the deep experiences of trial, temptation and victory through which He calls us to pass and which He has planned for each one of us according to our special conditions and needs for the purpose of strengthening, establishing and settling us.

2. Spiritual Power. "He has anointed us." This includes the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is the first step in establishing us: to put into us His own Spirit and thus supply us with the resources of His power and grace in spite of all our weaknesses, temptation and failures. Not only does He save us from the curse of sin but He commits all the resources of His infinite grace to see us through to the glorious end.

Some years ago, a millionaire bought a large tract of land in the neighborhood of a village. For some years the land remained unimproved and the value of the real estate in the neighborhood hung in the balance. Was he simply speculating and holding it for the future, or was he going to make great improvements, or would he some day sell it again? Nothing was certain. But one summer gangs of workmen moved upon

the place; engineers, masons, carpenters, painters, landscape gardeners began the process of transformation. A splendid mansion rose from the highest point of land; roads were laid out, trees and flowers crowned every picturesque approach and at last his own family moved into the splendid villa, and it was known that he had made it his home. Then, indeed, was its value assured, and all the property in the vicinity rose in sympathy to the highest point. He had committed his fortunes and family to this transaction.

Something like this happens when God moves into a human heart and the Holy Spirit anoints us and brings the living Christ to dwell within us and make our heart His home. Henceforth we are no longer the victims of every wind that blows nor at the mercy of our own capricious and feeble purposes, but we are established, strengthened and divinely enabled and we know that "He which has begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Christ."

3. Security. "Who has also sealed us." The seal is the mark of authenticity and authority. And so when the Holy Spirit seals us, He makes it certain that we belong to God, and He also makes it certain to us that God's grace in all its fulness belongs to us. Not only so, the seal brings the mark of reality. You can feel its sharp imprint; you can see the image which it cuts into the sensitive wax. It is something tangible and real. It speaks to every sense. So the Holy Ghost makes divine things real. He puts an edge on our spiritual consciousness. He makes vivid to us words that had been before but sounds. He wakes up in us spiritual senses that take hold of God just as truly as the ear takes hold of music and the sense of smell of sweet perfume. Divine things become intensely actual, and Christ a living, bright Reality.

Once more, the seal reproduces the image and brings actual resemblance. So the Holy Ghost gives to the heart into which He comes the very likeness of Jesus Christ, conforms us to the image of God and reflects in us the very spirit and qualities of our blessed Savior, reliving His own life in the disciple and gradually forming us to His will and character in everything.

All this is intensely real. The salvation which brings such results is not a dream, a fiction, an uncertainty. The God who does such things is a God on whom we can depend, and the salvation that fulfils such expectations is indeed a blessing that satisfies.

4. Continuance and Permanence. There is one thing more required to complete this picture of security, and that is the future. How long will it last? The answer is, "Who has given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This word "earnest" means a pledge of the future; no, more, the very germ and embryo of that future already planted in our hearts. The Holy Spirit in the believer is to his future inheritance what the bulb you planted last autumn is to the glorious blossoms of the Easter lily or the little dry seed to the golden harvests of the summer. The "earnest" is the sample, as well as the guarantee, of the full harvest; the handful of soil, telling us that all the broad acres are yet to be ours.

This has both a spiritual and a physical side. Our spiritual life now is the "earnest" and pledge of all that heaven will be to our soul. But there is another touch of grace which the Spirit brings to our body when He heals and quickens our suffering frame. This is the pledge of that physical resurrection which by and by is to come to all our mortal frame and lead us into the glorious life of the age to come. All this we anticipate here and now, and by the earnest we know that we shall not be disappointed in the larger unfolding.

What has the world to offer in comparison with such a glorious assurance? Robert Burns wrote of earthly pleasures which he had tasted in all their sweetness:

"Our pleasures are like poppies spread;
We snatch the flower, the bloom has fled;
Or like the snowflake on the river
A moment seen, then gone forever;
Or like the Borealis' blaze,
Which mocks our vision as we gaze;
Or like the rainbow's glorious form
Vanishing amid the storm."

In contrast with this, how inspiring the hope expressed in Dean Alford's beautiful hymn:

"My bark is wafted to the strand
By breath divine;
And on the helm there rests a hand
Mightier than mine;
One who has known in storms to sail
I have on board;
Above the raging of the gale
I hear my Lord;
Safe to the land, safe to the land
The end is this,
And then with Him go hand in hand
Far into bliss."

Was it ever better told than when the little child described the story of Enoch? Enoch used to walk with God every day. One day they took a longer walk than usual, and at the end God said to Enoch, "You are far from home; just come in and stay," and Enoch went in and stayed.

Is not such a God dependable? Is not such a salvation worth more than all this world can offer? Is not such a hope like an anchor, sure and steadfast? God help us to receive it, to prove it to the uttermost, and then to commend it to all around us.

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