

(2 Corinthians) ch.1:1-1:19

by Zac Poonen

The true secret of effective spiritual ministry is an overcoming in trial and affliction and temptation in our own life, which equips us to minister to others.

Duration: 44:13

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 1:1-6

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Apostolic Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, specifically chapter 1. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing that God has called Christian leaders and preachers to be a part of the body of Christ, rather than pursuing an independent ministry. The speaker highlights the significance of valuing others, even those who may be younger or less experienced. The speaker also discusses the concept of the local church, emphasizing that each church in the New Testament was independent and had its own appointed leadership. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the divine authority behind Paul's letters, highlighting his title as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and chapter 1. There is no book in the New Testament that reveals the inner life of the Apostle Paul as 2nd Corinthians. And in this respect, this is a most valuable book for us to study because it is the man Paul was that made his ministry. And the letter was written primarily by Paul to defend his integrity and his apostleship towards the Corinthians.

Not that he was bothered about the honour of the Christians in Corinth for himself, but in a day when the New Testament was not available in written form and there was no New Testament existing, it was important that people recognise that Paul had divine authority in the letters he was writing. And so this was the only reason why Paul had to write to defend his apostleship and his calling and his integrity as a servant of God. We must keep that in mind as we go through this letter so that we understand the reason behind Paul's writing.

If it were a situation like today when we have the completed canon of scripture of the entire New Testament, then there would be no need for such a defence of one's own apostleship. But the situation was quite different 1900 years ago when Paul was writing. And this is why when Paul writes his letters he almost always begins with this title that he gives to himself here in chapter 1 verse 1, Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

We are not to try and imitate that today. We have to see the reason why Paul said that in order to authenticate the divine authority behind this letter. That it was not just the writing of an ordinary believer but one who had been specially commissioned and one who was authorised by the Holy Spirit to write what we today have as the written word of God.

Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our brother. Paul was careful and humble to include those who were with him at the time of writing. Even though he wrote the letter himself there we see something of Paul's own humility and his recognition of the fact that God had called him to be a part of the body of Christ and not to an independent ministry all by himself.

This is really something that many Christian leaders and preachers need to recognise today. That God has not called anyone to an independent ministry outside of the body. And where we value others even if they are younger there can be an expression of the body of Christ which is impossible with one person by himself however gifted he may be.

Paul and Timothy there is an expression of the body of Christ. To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia. As we have considered in our previous studies the church is a local church at Corinth.

There is no such thing as the church in the whole of Asia Minor. That would be the churches. This may look like a small point but it shows us that denominationalism is not found in the New Testament.

Each church was an independent local church. And the one in Corinth was the church of God at Corinth with its own appointed leadership. The elders in Corinth with all the saints who are throughout that whole region of Achaia.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace, that wonderful New Testament word which Paul was always eager to use. The word of the new covenant that would lead people to forgiveness of sins and freedom from sins dominion.

And peace, another wonderful New Testament word very rarely found in the Old Testament. That inner peace that comes as a result of a clear conscience and a good relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And that peace in relationships with one another in the church which is the will of God for all churches.

Two wonderful New Testament words, grace to you and peace. God is the author of both and the Lord Jesus Christ. God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And notice in verse 3 He also calls God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice in verse 2 God is our Father and in verse 3 He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is where we see that Jesus equal with the Father emptied Himself and became one like us so that He might be an elder brother to us.

Remember what He told Mary Magdalene on the day of the resurrection. I ascend to my God and your God and my Father and your Father. And that is what we see here.

God our Father and verse 3 also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of mercy and God of all comfort.

There is a clear distinction there between the persons of the Trinity. Between the Father and the Son as two distinct persons. The Father and the Lord Jesus Christ both in verse 2 and verse 3. And we are not to confuse these.

And God is called here the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort. We need mercy because we have failed and we praise God that our God is the Father of mercy. And we also need strength.

Comfort meaning strength. That word fort that comes at the end of comfort has the implication of strength. Strength to live a Christian life in this evil world.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of mercy and God of all comfort. Who comforts us or we can read who strengthens us in all our affliction.

So that we may be able to comfort or strengthen those who are in any affliction. With the comfort or strength with which we ourselves are comforted by God. We could read it like this.

That God strengthens us in our difficulties and trials. So that we may be able to strengthen others when they face difficulties and trials with the same strength that we have been strengthened with by God when we ourselves faced similar situations. Now notice it doesn't say in verse 4 that God is going to prevent us from facing affliction or trial.

That is the understanding that many Christians have but it is not according to scripture. God is not a God who protects us from temptation or protects us from trial. But one who strengthens us to overcome the temptation.

And one who strengthens us to stand in the day of trial. So that we can be strong spiritually. To take us away from the battlefield altogether would not result in our becoming strong.

So God does not save us from affliction but saves us from going under that affliction and being crushed and depressed. But makes us overcomers on the battlefield. This is very important to remember because many Christians when they face trial or affliction their main prayer is that they might be delivered out of it.

God knows when to deliver any Christian out of trial. But He desires that we be overcomers in the midst of that trial. Not escape it altogether.

And there is a reason for this. It is very important for us to understand that God is a God of all comfort and strength as it says in verse 3. And we will never know that comfort and strength that God has unless we face trial and affliction. One who does not face trial and affliction will never know God as a God of comfort and strength.

He will only know Him as the Father of mercy because His sins are forgiven. God desires that we know Him not only as the Father of mercy but also as a God who can help us to overcome. Stand in the battlefield and be an overcomer.

And as we see in verse 4 the purpose is that we might thereby have strength to help others. We cannot help others just with Bible knowledge, just by quoting verses to them. Anybody can do that.

But if you have been through a trial and a verse in Scripture has become living to you in the midst of that trial then of course you can share that with another person far more meaningfully because it is a verse that has become a source of strength to you. And this is the meaning of verse 4 that the strength and grace

and help that God has given you through His Word and through His Spirit in the time of trial is what you can pass on to another person in the moment of his trial as well. And therefore we find that God allows us to go through affliction so that we can have a ministry to others and no one can have a ministry to others unless he has been through trial and affliction himself.

This is one of the first lessons that we learn in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Let's turn now to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 5. In our last study we were considering verse 4 where it says that God strengthens us in our affliction in order that he might give us a ministry to others. There are many who go to Bible schools and colleges in order to be prepared to have a ministry to others.

But here it tells us about God's Bible school. It is a school of affliction and trial and testing. And in that school if a man is an overcomer and learns to experience the comfort of God in the midst of his trial and affliction then he will be prepared to minister the word to others, not intellectually, but from an inner life that he has experienced in the midst of trial and affliction.

This is how God prepares his servants for a ministry. We were considering in our last study that the inner life of the Apostle Paul is revealed in 2 Corinthians. It's as it were a bearing of his own inner life, a revealing of his inner life.

And very interesting to see that he begins not with explaining how he studied at the feet of Gamaliel or the wonderful things he learnt from Gamaliel. In fact he doesn't even mention such things in the whole book. But that he begins with the true secret of all spiritual ministry.

And dear friends, those who are listening, let me say this is something that we all need to learn in our day. That the true secret of effective spiritual ministry is an overcoming in trial and affliction and temptation in our own life. This is what equips us to minister to others.

Because others around us are also facing temptation, trial and affliction. And what they need is not a lot of head knowledge of the Bible. Not a bunch of theological doctrines rammed down their throats.

But what they need is life. What they need is the word of life. Jesus said in John 6.63, the words I speak to you are spirit and life.

Jesus didn't speak intellectual theory. He spoke words that were full of spirit and life. And that can come only if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and we are faithful in the time of trial and affliction.

If either of these are absent, we cannot have any ministry to others no matter how much of the scriptures we know. And this is what Paul goes on to speak of in verse 5. He says, just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance. Here he uses that phrase of the sufferings of Christ.

What suffering of Christ belonged to Paul in abundance? It was not just the physical suffering that Jesus went through, for Paul had certainly not been crucified like Jesus. He did not experience the agony and pain of hanging on nails on a wooden cross. But yet he speaks of the sufferings of Christ being his in abundance.

There were many sufferings that Jesus went through throughout his earthly lifetime. Not just during the last 24 hours of his earthly life. Many Christians are taken up with merely the last 24 hours of Jesus' life and the sufferings that he had then.

Immediately preceding his hanging on the cross and the cross itself. But there were sufferings that he went through right through life. The suffering of rejection, of misunderstanding, of being scandalized and rejected and despised in so many ways.

And many inner trials and sufferings that he had because he was faithful to God. Righteous in an unrighteous world. Loving in an unloving world.

And there are sufferings that come to all who will seek to live godly in this ungodly world. And Jesus had those sufferings first so that he could be an example for us. And if Jesus is able to minister to us as a forerunner and not just as a preacher, it is because he has been tempted, Hebrews 4.15, in every single point as we are.

And this is why he is able to comfort us, we read in Hebrews 2.18. He is able to run to assist us because he knows what it is like to be tempted. Having known that himself, he is able to help us. And Paul says it is the same basis on which I have a ministry as an apostle to you Corinthians.

Not just that God filled my head with a lot of theological doctrine, but that he has given me an experience in the trials that I have gone through which are an overflow of the sufferings of Christ. In other words, the sufferings of Christ have overflowed from him onto us, his servants. And we have a share in it, not just a little bit.

We have it in abundance, he says in verse 5. Why did Paul need the sufferings of Christ in abundance? Because he had to have a very wide and a large ministry to many people. And the more the size of the circle of our ministry, the larger our boundary of ministry, the greater is our suffering going to be if we are to be effective servants of Christ. Jesus suffered the most because he had to serve the whole world.

None of us are called to serve the whole world, but we are called to serve some. And that determines the size of the circle of our suffering. And Paul had it in abundance because he was an apostle to many, many churches.

And not only the sufferings of Christ overflowed to him, but the comfort through Christ also overflowed. We can take an example from the time when the disciples were out in the middle of the sea and they faced a storm. If they had stayed on land and disobeyed the word of their Master and Lord, they would never have experienced that storm.

And those who are disobedient to Christ usually do not experience the storm. But those who are faithful find that in the middle of the sea they experience a storm. And they discover that in the middle of that storm, Jesus comes and stills it.

Now, if you want to experience Jesus stilling the storm, you've got to face the storm first. If you don't face the storm, you'll never experience the power of Christ who is able to still the storm. That's the same thing we see here.

That if we don't face any trials, we'll never know how Jesus can help us to overcome in those trials. If we run away from the battlefield, we'll never know or have the experience of Jesus helping us to be overcomer in the battlefield. So when we face a trial or a difficulty, the question we need to ask is not, Lord, why has this happened to me? Neither should we be praying, Lord, please get me out of this as soon as possible.

But our prayer should be, Lord, help me to be an overcomer here. And you know when to remove me out of this trial. That's no problem to you at all because you will never allow me to be tested beyond my ability according to your promise in 1 Corinthians 10.13. Well, then help me to be an overcomer in this battlefield.

There's no need to ask why because the reason is given us in 2 Corinthians 1.4. It is so that we might have a ministry to others in the midst of their trial. So those of us who are interested in serving others and not just living a selfish Christian life down here, we must be willing to face trial and affliction and difficulty all through life. When will this end? When did it end for Jesus? It ended only with death.

He suffered all the time till then. And it's not going to end earlier for any wholehearted disciple of Jesus either. We can look around at so many Christians who seem to have a cushy way through life.

It would be foolish for us to compare ourselves with them. Those who have a cushy way through life are usually the ones who have no ministry to others. They may have head knowledge, but they don't have an effective spiritual ministry.

If we are afflicted, Paul says in verse 6, it is for your comfort. He's concerned about the strengthening of the Corinthians and their salvation. If we are comforted or strengthened, that's also for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

In other words, he says it is in your interest that I'm willing to go through this affliction. And so that you can have the strength to face with boldness the same suffering which we are also enduring. Paul says how in the world can I tell you to be strong in the face of affliction if I can't be strong in the face of affliction myself? I'd be just a man preaching a lot of theories to you.

But he says I've faced them myself. God's taken me through a lot of trials. And therefore I can tell you people to be bold in the time of trial.

And he says our hope in you is unshaken. It's firmly grounded. Think of the encouragement that must have come to the Corinthians to hear such words from a great apostle.

There is a tremendous power in words of encouragement to say to a person, I have confidence in you. My hope in you is unshaken. I believe that just as you are sharers of our sufferings, you will also be sharers of our comfort and strength.

Paul had that confidence that if the Corinthians went the way he went, they would not only experience the suffering but also the comfort. And then he goes on to say in verse 8, he says, I don't want to hide from you, brethren, all the affliction that came to us in Asia. What we endured is far more than what you are enduring there in Corinth.

He says we were tried excessively beyond our strength. We almost gave up hope. We despaired even of life.

But he says God helped us. He's sharing something of his inner life, of the trials he went through. He wouldn't normally reveal it to others.

But to encourage these Corinthian Christians who were going through trial and difficulty themselves, he tells them something of his own testimony. Not of the miracles he did, but of the sufferings he went through. Thereby God can give him a ministry.

That's the way God can give us a ministry. Let's turn now to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 8. Paul says, we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction, which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively beyond our strength so that we despaired even of life. It's very wonderful that Paul gives us an honest description of what he went through.

A testimony of what he suffered. Because very often we as Christians can go through situations like that ourselves. Burdened excessively beyond our strength.

That means crushed far beyond what they could stand or endure. Overburdened beyond our own strength. Does that contradict what it says in 1 Corinthians 10, 13, that God will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability? No, it doesn't.

Because it goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 10, 13, that in that trial God will make a way of escape that we may be able to endure. That way of escape is by God giving us grace to face the trial. He comes out with that in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, where he says when he faced his thorn in the flesh, God gave him grace to bear it.

So even when we are burdened excessively, and as human beings we cannot stand it, that humanly speaking it is beyond our ability to bear. That is right. Beyond our strength.

To such an extent that we despaired of life means we renounced all hope of even living through it. In fact, Paul says, we told ourselves that this was the end, we are finished. And he goes on to say in verse 9, we had the sentence of death within ourselves.

In other words, as he considered it, he had been sentenced to death. The trial was so severe that he thought he was going to die. We don't know what he is referring to.

Perhaps to the time when he was stoned in Lystra as we read in Acts chapter 14. Many other trials perhaps which we don't know, but it says in Acts 14 that they left him for dead. There could have been other places too where Paul suffered and it looked as if he would die.

But the purpose of all this was, he says, this was in order to make me rely not on myself but on God who raises the dead. That is a wonderful thing. That even if it is a situation where it looks as if we are going to die, we can still trust in a God who raises the dead.

Death has been man's greatest enemy. And we praise God that we have a father who through Jesus Christ has conquered death for us. And therefore we do not fear even where we have to face a situation where there is a great peril of death.

And in this particular case we read in verse 10 that God delivered Paul from this great peril of death. And he says he will deliver us in future too. And it is on him that we have set our hope, our confidence and our trust.

So what did we learn from these verses? That when God allows us to be pressed beyond our own ability, crushed to a point where it looks as if we will break down or have a nervous breakdown or a mental breakdown or something like that. What is the purpose? The purpose is that we no longer rely on man. That we no longer rely on ourselves but only on the living God.

God is a jealous God and he will not give his glory to another. And you know how it is with us as human beings. We have such a tendency to lean on our own abilities, our own strength.

And if we do not have ability and strength then to lean on the strength and ability of others around us who can help us. And God desires to wean us away from all this dependence on ourselves and on others. He wants to bring us to that place where we will lean wholly upon him.

This is the place he wants to bring every one of us. And blessed are those Christians who have learnt that lesson early in their Christian life. There are very few who have learnt that lesson to lean entirely upon God alone.

Most Christians lean on God plus themselves or God plus some other human beings. And this is one reason why God allows us to go through trials so that we can have a deep experience of his supernatural power. Like we considered in our last study of the disciples in the boat facing the storm.

And there no man could help them. They could not help themselves. Only God could and God did.

And blessed are we when we face situations where we cannot help ourselves. No one else can help us. And it is only almighty God who can help us.

It is a very blessed wonderful position to be in. Because that is the position and place God himself has planned and designed so that we can experience his deliverance and his power. And this is why in a sense it is a luxury to be in a tight spot.

Because it is in that tight spot that we can experience a miracle working God who can deliver us and help us out of it. Why? Not just so that we can boast. Far from it.

God doesn't do things for us so that we can boast in a testimony that we give to others. No. But so that we can have something to share with others in order to help them.

Not so that they think of us as wonderful Christians. But that they can come to that same confidence in God when they face trial that we have come to through the trials we have faced. This is how Paul had a ministry.

And he says it is not just by ourselves that we manage this. He says you Corinthians have also helped us, verse 11, through your prayers. That in the midst of all these trials we didn't give up.

Not just because of our own ability but because you prayed and God answered your prayer. And therefore we got help. You prayed for us.

See Paul's humility there. That he gives some credit to the Corinthians for their prayers. He doesn't just boast as though he was a great mighty Christian who came through triumphantly through that trial.

But he says I am so thankful that you people prayed for me and for us. And now that God has answered your prayer as for us he says thanks can be given by many persons, verse 11, on our behalf. He says we praise God for his deliverance.

And you people who have prayed for us can also thank God for the deliverance that he has given us. For this mighty blessing that he has bestowed upon us through the prayers of many. Having dealt with that subject he goes on in verse 12 to speak about his own boasting.

He says if at all we can boast about anything. What is it? We were just talking about boasting. Not boasting about what mighty wonderful Christians they were Paul and Timothy in the trials they went through.

Far from it. But rather he says if at all we can speak about anything it is just this. The testimony of our conscience.

And remember this dear friends. The most important testimony that you can get is not the testimony of an apostle. Or the testimony of a servant of God what he thinks about you.

Or the testimony of the elders of your church what they think about you. Or the testimony of all your fellow believers what they think about you. The most important testimony that any believer can have is what is mentioned here in verse 12.

The testimony of his own conscience. What testimony does your conscience give about you? Because the apostles and elders around you may not know anything about your private life. And they certainly don't know anything about your thought life.

But your conscience knows every single thing there is to know about your entire conscious life. And the testimony of your conscience is what you must go by. That is your real value before God.

Not what others think about you. Here is a mistake so many people make. They evaluate themselves on the basis of what other people think of their spirituality.

That's the greatest deception there is. No, it is the testimony of your own conscience which is a true value of what you are spiritually. And he says this is what we can boast of.

The testimony of our own conscience which you Corinthians of course do not realize. It's my own conscience Paul says that tells me what I'm like. But he says my conscience tells me that I have lived and conducted myself in the world in holiness and in godly sincerity.

Just think of that. That Paul's conscience could tell him that you have conducted yourself in private in your thought life, in your attitudes, in your motives, in your reactions to people in holiness and godly sincerity. He wasn't perfect.

He hadn't become like Jesus Christ yet. He was a long way from that. And we are all a long way from that.

But we can walk in holiness and godly sincerity. Not in fleshly wisdom. That means not in human cleverness.

Worldly cunning. There is a lot of worldly cunning among believers. Where they fool one another.

Paul didn't have any of that. There was a sincerity in him. There was a freedom from hypocrisy.

There was a transparency. In the grace of God he said. He doesn't take credit for himself.

He says this is the grace of God that did that for me. We have conducted ourselves in the world and especially towards you Corinthians. You have seen that.

But he says beyond what you have seen my conscience tells me the same thing. Blessed are all those who can have such a testimony from their conscience. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 12.

For our proud confidence is this, Paul says, the testimony of our conscience. And we considered in our last study that the most important testimony that any believer can ever have is the testimony of his own conscience. Not the testimony of another human being.

And Paul's conscience testified that he had conducted himself in the whole world. Wherever he had been. And even in Corinth.

In holiness. In godly sincerity. Not in fleshly wisdom.

With pure motives. With single heartedness and sincerity in God's sight. Not with human cunning and worldly shrewdness.

But in the strength of God's grace. It's a very important phrase there. In the strength of God's grace.

That God strengthened him to live this life. And that's what encourages us. That we can also live such a life where our conscience testifies that we have walked in the whole world in holiness and godly sincerity and not with human cunning and cleverness in the strength which the grace of God gave him.

And then he says about the letters that he writes to the Corinthians. And this letter also. He says we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand.

And that means you don't have to read between the lines of my letters. I don't have any double meaning in what I'm saying. They mean just what you understand them to mean when you read them.

Many of us when we write letters to people. There is human cunning and shrewdness and double meanings in what we write. Very often.

Reports of our work for the Lord. Hidden meanings and subtle insinuations. But Paul says there is nothing of this hypocrisy in me.

My conscience tells me that in sincerity I walked and when I write to you you can be absolutely sure there is no double meaning. I speak straight the truth. The whole truth and nothing but the truth.

And you will understand what I'm writing if you just read it exactly as it is. There is no double meaning in it. Blessed are we if we come to that guilelessness and freedom from hypocrisy in our speech and in our letter writing.

And he says I trust you will understand fully what I'm writing. And that you will admit that this is the truth right until the very end. Verse 14 just as you also partially did understand us.

You have partly understood the meaning of my life. He says and also that you are proud of us as we are proud of you. In the day of the Lord Jesus.

It's a wonderful thing to live in the light of the second coming of Christ which is referred to here as the day of our Lord Jesus. And that we can have such a testimony in our conscience that other people who have confidence in us in that day when our inner life is exposed will not be disappointed with what they see but will be proud. That's a very wonderful way to live.

And that's a prayer that is good for all of us to pray. Lord help me to live in such a way that other people who look at my external life now and have confidence in me will have no reason to be put to shame in the

day when all my inner life is exposed and I stand before you stripped of everything that is on the outside that they will be proud of me even then in the day of our Lord Jesus. Paul was like that.

Verse 15 and he says in this confidence with this conviction in my mind I plan to come and see you first. In other words, he had this confidence that God had strengthened him through the trials he went through and he had received a comfort which he could pass on to the Corinthians verses 4-9. He also had this confidence verses 12-14 that there was no worldly cunning or hypocrisy in his attitude.

In this confidence he says I intended at first to come to you that you might have the pleasure of a second visit have a pleasure twice over that you might twice receive a blessing. Paul knew that any person, he wasn't just thinking of himself any person who walked in the way described here in verses 3-14 could be a blessing to others. And he didn't have a false humility that imagined that he could never be a blessing to others.

He knew that he could be a blessing to the people in Corinth because that's how he had lived. And any one of us who follow Paul's footsteps here in verses 4-14 can also be a blessing wherever we go. And this is the secret.

He says this confidence, with this confidence I intended to come to you so that you might receive a blessing a second time. He had been there already once that he might have a second blessing. Verse 16, that is not just to stay there but to visit you both on my way to Macedonia and to come to you again on my return from Macedonia so that he'd be there twice and be a blessing to them both on his way to Macedonia and on his return from Macedonia.

And he says that by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. Paul was humble enough to acknowledge that he needed their encouragement and help to be seen off on his way to Judea. Verse 17.

When I therefore decided and intended to come was I vacillating? I was not vacillating. No. Or he says that which I purpose do I purpose according to the flesh that with me there should be yes yes and no, no at the same time.

Now here Paul is trying to explain why he probably couldn't come. He says does this mean that I say yes when I really mean no. Does it mean I'm sort of a diplomat who doesn't want to offend you and so don't really speak the truth.

All the things which I plan he says do I plan according to the flesh according to my own impulse. Do I make my plans like a worldly man? No. It wasn't that.

It was not that I made my plans like a worldly man. Neither was it that when I said yes I'll come I didn't really mean it. No.

Or that it is yes today and no tomorrow. Far from it. Such conduct is absolutely unworthy of a servant of God who plans his life that he makes his plans according to the way human beings make their plans like worldly people depending on the flesh and their own convenience.

Or secondly that he's a diplomat saying yes when he means no or saying yes today and no tomorrow. All these things are unworthy of any true servant of God and Paul was certainly not like that. But he says as God is faithful I want to tell you that our word to you is not yes and no.

It's not a hesitating message of yes and then no. Not a mixture of yes and no. As surely as God can be relied on he says you can rely on the fact that when I say yes I mean yes and when I say no I mean no.

And then he gives the example who he himself has been following the son of God Christ Jesus verse 19 who was preached among you by us by me Silvanus and Timothy. Silvanus is another name for Silas Paul's co-worker with whom he had been to Corinth and Timothy. It was not yes and no but in him, in Christ it was always yes.

He says there is no uncertainty in our message. We never wavered in uncertainty in the message that we proclaim to you. There was absolute certainty and conviction.

It was a divine yes. And then he says it's just like the promises of God verse 20. All the promises of God in Christ they are yes.

There is no uncertainty about any of the promises of God. We can read it like this that to all the promises of God Jesus supplies the yes that confirms them. We can say a promise is like a check filled out for a certain amount of money and the yes means Jesus has put a signature to that check and then it can definitely be cashed in the bank of heaven.

That would be a paraphrase of that verse. Every promise of God finds its affirmation in Christ. He has put a signature to every promise of God.

And therefore also by him. That is why when we give glory to God it is through him that we say our Amen. And that's a very beautiful verse that tells us how we are to handle God's promises.

God gives a promise that's like an amount filled out in a check in our name. But if Jesus Christ had not put a signature to it we would have no assurance that that check could be cashed in the bank of heaven. But Jesus has put a signature, it says here to every single promise of God.

Every single check that there is in the scriptures. But we still don't get the money until we go to the bank and cash it. And that's what he says in the last part of verse 20.

By Christ we have to put our Amen. We've got to put our signature on the back of that check to collect it to the glory of God through us. That Amen means it will be so.

It's a Hebrew word which means it will be so. Jesus has put his Yes and we are to put our Amen. He's put his signature and when we put our signature and put it in say Lord I believe in the name of Jesus Christ this promise of yours which Christ Jesus has said Yes and signed to I present with my signature of faith I will definitely receive it.

That's the way every one of us can receive the promises of God.

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