

Because of My Covenant with God I Can Believe His Promises

2 Corinthians 1:15-22

“And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit - to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us - by me, Silvanus, and Timothy - was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

I suppose the greatest joy that I have as a pastor is watching people grow and reach their potential. It is watching you grow and develop. It is watching you become everything that God created you to become.

I am convinced that you and I, as Christians, live far beneath our privileges. We have an awesome God who has unbelievable blessings for us and yet many of us live as what I call spiritual paupers. As we continue this series of messages that deals with our **covenant relationship** with God, I have only one goal in mind, and that goal is to get you to understand that **God is faithful to His covenant** and **faithful to His promises**. God’s covenant relationship with His people is a marvelous relationship, and when you and I understand it, we begin to grow spiritually and God begins to bless us in ways that we have never been blessed before.

I am convinced that every one of you desires, more than anything else; to grow spiritually and to be the best man or woman you can possibly be for God. Amen? That is a fact of life. **If**

I know the people here at Mountain Grove at all, I know that you want to be the best you can be for the glory of God. And in this series of messages we are going to talk about that. We are going to talk about the incredible promises that God has for us. And we are going to talk about why you and I do not enter into this covenant relationship and therefore, we live way beneath the privileges God has for us.

Now, all of us have been disappointed – either in ourselves or someone else. We all know what it is like to have somebody promise us something and not come through. And we all know what it is like to have high expectations and have somebody, in their own humanity; fail. Whether it was a child or a husband or wife or our self, we all know what that is like.

Interestingly enough, the Apostle Paul let down a group of Christians in Corinth at one time. He had promised to visit them, but it didn't work out. Now let's look at that passage. He talks about this covenant relationship that I want to introduce in our series tonight. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul is trying to explain why he didn't stop by to visit the people of Corinth. In verse 15 he says, "I was so sure of your pride in us that I had planned to visit you first of all. In this way you would have the blessing of two visits from me, once on my way to Macedonia and again on my return from there, and then you could send me on to Judea." Because he could not keep this promise, the people of Corinth were accusing Paul of following fleshly wisdom, of being careless with the will of God and with his promises, and making plans simply to please himself. So in verse 17 he said, "Do you think that I couldn't make up my mind about what to do? Or did I seem like someone who says yes or no simply to please others?" You can tell that the integrity of the Apostle Paul is kind of on the line. The people are saying, "Why did Paul do this? Why did he say he was going to come and he didn't come?"

Paul then switches to the integrity and the incredibility of God. Look what he says in verse 18, "God can be trusted. And so can I. And when I say that our answer to you has always been yes and

never no, this is because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is always yes and never no. And he is the one that Silas, Timothy and I told you about."

The next verse is great to underline because now Paul is going to give us the secret of the covenant relationship that God has with us. Look what he says, "Christ says yes to all of God's promises." Now that is powerful. You see, in the Old Testament, God's promise was of a covenant relationship. And do you know what happened? Guess who always broke the covenant? We did! God is always faithful. Man was always foolishly disobeying and doing his own thing.

So Paul is saying that man broke the covenant all the time, but it's okay because Jesus came and died for our sins, and he is not going to break it. Now, there is a security about that covenant. Every promise in God's word, our Lord is saying "yes" and "amen" to. God makes it possible for us to stand firmly together with Christ. God is also the one who chose us and put his Son in our hearts to show that we belong only to him.

Here is the series objective, what I want to accomplish in the coming weeks with you: *I want to illustrate what it means to be in covenant with God and to experience the promises and the privileges of the partnership with him.*

I said in the beginning of this message, we are all used to promises. We live in a Public Relations society. Commercials promising much, and sometimes producing and sometimes not. And then there is the political arena. Our society is used to not only hearing promises but also being let down. Therefore, it is so important that we understand the objective of this series.

As a child of God we have access to all of heaven's resources! This truth is seen in Romans 8:14-17, "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with

our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

That is one of the most amazing truths in all the Word of God. That you are I are "co-heirs with Christ." You know, God, who has it all, wants a partnership with you and me, who have nothing. In fact, Jesus said we can do nothing without him. **In other words, without Jesus you and I are a mess.** We are helpless. We are hopeless. **But, with Him nothing is impossible.** That is why Paul said Philippians 4:13, "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." God says, "I want to join hands and have a partnership with you." Now, what is really amazing is that you and I are so stubborn that we cross our arms and say, "Hey, I'm not sure I want to do that." **We are kind of like the mouse that was crossing a bridge with an elephant.** As they walked the bridge began to shake, and when they got to the other side, the mouse said to the elephant, "We really shook that bridge, didn't we?" **That's the same thing that we have going with God.**

God wants to have a partnership with us. People like the mouse, with absolutely no influence, no effect, no power. Do you know the word, "synergy?" **It is a word used to describe a relationship that is so good, and the chemistry is so right, that both people become better than they ever would have been by themselves.** It is a wonderful word. Well, I am talking about a **spiritual relationship** that creates a lot of "synergy," until one plus one does not equal two. It is a **spiritual partnership** and **bondedness** that you and I have with holy God that makes us greater than what we could ever be without Him!!

I suppose the most amazing thing to me is how many Christians, who have this incredible, unbelievable partnership, walk around as if we have no God, no protector, and no one to take us through this horrible life. I am amazed at how many Christians live their life beat down and defeated! It seems to me, most Christians live with this attitude, "Oh, God if you could just come through today, I won't ask you for anything else. If you could just

answer this one prayer." It is as if God is saying, "I hope I can, I hope I can. I'll do my best. I'll give it my best shot."

Child of God, we need to get an understanding of what God has promised us in His Word. The problem is *not* God's ability to take care of all of these promises; the issue is you and I.

You see; God wants to bless you. He is not some cosmic killjoy up in heaven getting his jollies every time you mess up or bump your head. God wants to bless you.

Deuteronomy 29:10-29 gives us three reasons God established His covenant with Israel, "All of you – tribal leaders, elders, officers, all the men of Israel - are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God. Your little ones and your wives are with you, as well as the foreigners living among you who chop your wood and carry your water. You are standing here today to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God. The LORD is making this covenant, including the curses. By entering into the covenant today, he will establish you as his people and confirm that he is your God, just as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "But you are not the only ones with whom I am making this covenant with its curses. I am making this covenant both with you who stand here today in the presence of the LORD our God, and also with the future generations who are not standing here today. "You remember how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we traveled through the lands of enemy nations as we left. You have seen their detestable practices and their idols made of wood, stone, silver, and gold. I am making this covenant with you so that no one among you - no man, woman, clan, or tribe - will turn away from the LORD our God to worship these gods of other nations, and so that no root among you bears bitter and poisonous fruit. "Those who hear the warnings of this curse should not congratulate themselves, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am following the desires of my own stubborn heart.' This would lead to utter ruin! The LORD will never pardon such people. Instead his anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them, and the LORD will erase their names from under heaven. The LORD will separate them from all the tribes

of Israel, to pour out on them all the curses of the covenant recorded in this Book of Instruction. “Then the generations to come, both your own descendants and the foreigners who come from distant lands, will see the devastation of the land and the diseases the LORD inflicts on it.²³ They will exclaim, ‘The whole land is devastated by sulfur and salt. It is a wasteland with nothing planted and nothing growing, not even a blade of grass. It is like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD destroyed in his intense anger.’ “And all the surrounding nations will ask, ‘Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why was he so angry?’ “And the answer will be, ‘This happened because the people of the land abandoned the covenant that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. Instead, they turned away to serve and worship gods they had not known before, gods that were not from the LORD. That is why the LORD’s anger has burned against this land, bringing down on it every curse recorded in this book. In great anger and fury the LORD uprooted his people from their land and banished them to another land, where they still live today!’ “The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.”

First, God wanted to “establish” them. The children of Israel were so flighty, so in and out, up and down, good and bad, hot and cold. And God said, “No, no! I am tired of this. I want to get you on solid ground. I want to establish you.” Like the hymn writer said, "On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand." Look what he said in verse 13, "This covenant was so that he will establish you as his people and confirm that he is your God,"

Second, to impact others. He wanted them to enter into this covenant partnership, not only for their own sake, but also for the sake of their children and their neighbors. Look what it says in verse 14-15, "But you are not the only ones with whom I am making this covenant...I am making this covenant both with you who stand here today in the presence of the LORD our God, and also with the future generations who are not standing here today.” In other words, God wants to bless me so I can be a blessing to others!

By the way, I believe that God has blessed the United States because we have been living off the blessings of our forefathers who were before us and the heritage of our country. I believe that everything we have today is, basically, IOU's that we have been collecting. That's the good news. The bad news is that we are almost out. It seems to me our nation has turned against the biblical principals upon which we were founded, and I am afraid we are paying a high price for our rebellion!

Anyway, God blessed them individually. He blessed their neighbors and the next generation. And thirdly, He blessed them as a nation. And He continues to bless Israel to this very day!

The good news is God will fulfill all of the promises. Now, here is the bad news.

As Christians, we live beneath our privileges because:

First, we fail to believe and claim God's promises. Now, we all believe it, but we just don't receive it.

I like the "pen" principle. That is you have to believe, but you also have to receive. (I have this pen in my hand. If I told you I was going to give it to you, would you believe it?) But you don't have it, do you? Why don't you have it? Because you haven't taken it. When does it become yours? When you believe? No, when you receive. The key was not believing that I would give you the pen. The key was receiving it, taking it for yourself. That is true about every promise that God has given to us in His Word.

I know all kind of Christians who can quote verses, but they have never learned how to apply them and receive them in their life. And because of that, they are Bible quoting machines, living way beneath the promises that God has for them.

Second, we fail to meet the conditions of God's promises. 1 John 3:22 says, "And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." God has some conditions in his promises and that is what this series is all about: learning how to meet the conditions

God has for us. Listen to this statement, God promises many things to us only if we are obedient to His commandments.

What is the key to the Christian life? Very simple. Obedience to God. **You see, God has already given us the promises.** Now, he is waiting for us to enter this covenant relationship with him. D. L. Moody said, "If God is your partner, make your plans big."