

## Prayer 4 — Prayer and Promises

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Passages	2 Corinthians 1:20
Sermon Series	Prayer
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### Introduction (Connection):

[Turn to 2 Corinthians 1 and 7]

We're in our sermon series on prayer called *Prayer* and we will keep going in this all the way till the end of March, unless God says otherwise.

### Tension:

For today, let me start of this time by asking you a really challenging question, that I heard a year ago and keep asking myself often.

Here's the question: **If God gave you everything you've been praying for, what would you have?**

Think about the magnitude of this question... what would you have?

Some of you are too ashamed to answer that question, because your answers would probably sound something like, "Shoot, I'd win the lottery, a floating mansion on Beach Lake, I'd have a Lamborghini that I could drive at any speed I want without getting caught by police, and I'd quit my job."

There's a reason why you don't have those things!

Yet others of you, if you were honest with yourself, would have to answer, “Scott, I wouldn’t have anything, because I haven’t been praying.”

And still others of you would be able to answer something like: “this family member would be saved, I’d be a lot more godly, that relationship with so-and-so would be reconciled, this sin in my life would be gone, my church would be reaching tons of lost people with the gospel...”

No matter how you answer this question, today I want to show you how you can pray in such a way that God answers your prayer with a resounding yes every time you pray.

And no, this isn’t some ju-ju magic where if you rub the bottle the right way God instantly turns into a genie granting you all your wishes.

It isn’t if you tune your radio to K-love, stop cussing, and start doing your devotions that all of sudden God is like, “Everything you want, no matter what it is, it’s all yours!”

There is a way that you and I can pray that guarantees a response of yes from God every time.

We’ve talked a lot about the theory of prayer so far, today is going to be a bit more practical.

## **Exposition:**

Let’s take a look at 2 Cor. 1.

Context: Paul is writing his second letter to the church in the city of Corinth, and it starts off with some negative tones.

Paul had plans to visit this church and he had given them his word that he would come, but those plans changed—he wasn’t able to visit them.

Apparently, people in the church of Corinth got perturbed by this; they began accusing Paul of breaking promises saying Paul doesn't care about them.<sup>1</sup>

In v. 17 Paul is like, "Do you think I'm the kind of guy who makes plans and confirms them while at the same time believing it won't work out?"

Of course plans can change, and there will be times we can't keep our word, and we as Christians, of all people, ought to be gracious when that happens.

But Paul turns not to defend his own character, but the character of Jesus.

***2 Cor. 1:18-20 — "As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. <sup>19</sup> For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. <sup>20</sup> For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."***<sup>2</sup>

There's so much we could talk about here, but there's two main truths in this text I believe needs emphasis today:

- 1) Jesus is God's "Yes!"
- 2) Jesus is Our "Amen!"

First

**Jesus is God's "Yes!"**

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<sup>1</sup> David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 96-99.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 1:18-20.

Jesus calls himself the way, the truth and the life; He is the truth... meaning he is the definition of reality, the source of understanding, the one who can provide certainty.

In revelation 19 we see that Jesus is named "Faithful and True."

Ultimately God is the source of truth, of what is certain... Jesus is God's "yes."

And in this context, Paul says Jesus is God's yes to all of the promises God has made.

So when God made his promise to Abraham that by his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, Jesus is God's yes, making the promise a reality.

When God promised to David to raise up David's offspring to establish his throne forever, Jesus is God's yes, making certain of his promise.

Jesus is all of God's promises made certain towards humankind.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is the key for us to all of God's promises.

All the promises? Like, all of them?

Like even Jeremiah 29:11 - "I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 103.

<sup>4</sup> [Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), Je 29:11.

Wasn't that promise made to Israelites while they were in exile? How could that promise be for us?

Well, the word "promises" appears twice in 2 Corinthians.

Flip over to chapter 7; we're going to look at the end of chapter six and see what Paul does with this.

Keep in mind that the church in Corinth was Gentile, not Jewish.

And yet, 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul begins to quote several promises from God that were made centuries beforehand specifically to the Jews.

Check it out:

*2 Corinthians 6:16 — "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup> Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, <sup>18</sup> and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."<sup>5</sup>*

These are three different promises from the Old Testament books of Leviticus, Exodus and Isaiah.<sup>6</sup>

Random promises at different historical times made to different generations of Jews.

And yet, look at how Paul starts chapter 7...

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<sup>5</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 6:16–18.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Leviticus 26:12, Exodus 32:27, and Isaiah 52:11

2 Cor. 7:1 — “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”<sup>7</sup>

Paul, speaking to Gentiles centuries later, says, “We have these promises too.”

We call these promises our own because they are in Scripture and because they are part of Jesus’ inheritance that he won for us on the cross.

We too have these promises and every promise from God for every dimension of our lives.<sup>8</sup>

Brothers and sisters, conservatively, there are over 3,000 promises in the Bible.

In fact, the bible is a book of promises and in a Christ-centered way, every one of them is a resounding “Yes” for you and me.<sup>9</sup>

Since Jesus is God’s yes, what does this mean for us?

## 2) Jesus is Our “Amen!”

Look at how v. 20 ends; Because every one of God’s promises finds it yes in Jesus...

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<sup>7</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 7:1.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Kerr, *Take Words With You* (no publisher, 2010), introduction, available online at <https://www.challies.com/wp-content/uploads/take-words-with-you.pdf> [accessed February 17, 2020].

<sup>9</sup> J.D. Greear, “Pray God’s Words Back to Him: Claiming the Promises of God” (J.D. Greear Ministries, entry posted April 4, 2013, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://jdgrear.com/blog/pray-gods-words-back-to-him-claiming-the-promises-of-god/>).

***v. 20b — That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”***

We utter our Amen... what category of Christian practice do the words “utter” and “amen” belong to? Prayer!

I think we’ve all been helped in understanding what the word “Amen” means every Sunday we pray our benediction over one another... most simply it means “yes!”

But it does mean a lot more than “yes.” And it does mean a lot more than just a word you say to end your prayers.

Amen is a transliteration of the Hebrew word ‘āmēn which is a word of agreement meaning, “let it be so” or “indeed.”

If “yes” means the promises are certain, “amen” means they are accomplished.<sup>10</sup>

Let it be done!

Guys, in Isaiah 65:16, God is called the “God of the Amen.”

In Revelation 3:14, Jesus writes “to the angel of the church in Laodicea: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness’”<sup>11</sup>

Jesus is the Amen, God accomplishing his faithful and true promises!

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Spurgeon, “All the Promises,” in *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 12:368.

<sup>11</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 3:14.

Because of this, we utter our Amens over God's promises in agreement that Christ won them for us and we're asking that they be accomplished!

Pay close attention though: [Jesus isn't "amen" to all that we pray, but all that God promised.](#)

Jesus is God's yes to all meaningful human hopes, to our longing for life, wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification.

God says no "to every selfish and perverted longing of humanity, to every desire to 'get rich quick,' to dominate others, or to organize societies for selfish advantage."<sup>12</sup>

God's aim in all of his promises to us is our godliness.

[2 Peter 1:3-4 — "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, ... 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,"](#)<sup>13</sup>

What makes a promise precious to you? What makes a promise great?

Two things: (1) the content of the promise and (2) the character of the promisor.

God has promises to make you like him, godly, full of love and kindness and generosity and selflessness and joyful and good...

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<sup>12</sup> David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 103.

<sup>13</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Pe 1:3-4.

And God's character is unmatched in power and faithfulness, all he speaks he does and it comes to pass, and he bears all authority.

Charles Spurgeon put it this way, "[God] cannot speak of promise, and let it blow away with the wind. It is his promise after he has uttered it; and those to whom it was given can bring it back to him, and say, "That is your promise, will you not fulfill it?" If a man repudiates his own pledged word, he does, in fact, repudiate the fruit of himself, the outgoing of his own life..."<sup>14</sup>

God's character is on the line when it comes to him keeping his own promises, so he is always sure to keep them, because he is faithful to himself and to his word!

That is why all 3,000 promises are precious and great!

So there are two truths that we've looked at so far:

- 1) **Jesus is God's "Yes!"**
- 2) **Jesus is Our "Amen!"**

## **Application/Challenge:**

So here's where this lands perfectly into our series on prayer and here is the challenge I want to make to you, a simple practice to incorporate into your prayer life, and that quote from Spurgeon got right at it:

### **Pray God's Promises**

That's it! Simple, isn't it?

Take God's word back to God; remind Him of his promises, not as if he forgot, but to show you value you his word enough to ask it back to him!

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Spurgeon, "All the Promises," in *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 12:365.

Remember how we defined prayer at the start of this? Prayer is the personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God.<sup>15</sup>

J. Gary Millar defines it a little differently:

“Prayer is the act of asking God to do what he has already promised to do.”<sup>16</sup>

In fact, probably the two most powerful words you could ever use in prayer are, “You said...”

“God, you said this, Amen, let it be done.”

Jacob in Genesis even does it; God promises in Genesis 31 that he will be with Jacob and multiply him.

Then, later on when Jacob is in a terrible crisis, he cries out to God in prayer and says this...

“you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”<sup>17</sup>

And that night we have the famous wrestling match between Jacob and God where God holds true to his promise and blesses Jacob.

**Brothers and sisters**, you cannot lose praying the promises of God.

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<sup>15</sup> As defined by Tim Keller in *Prayer; Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 45.

<sup>16</sup> J. Gary Millar, “The Doctrine of Prayer,” [TheGospelCoalition.org](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-doctrine-of-prayer/), accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-doctrine-of-prayer/>.

<sup>17</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 32:12.

God already said he would do them; his answer will never be “no” when we’re asking him his own promises to us!

I get approached often from people saying they don’t know how to pray or what words to use or not use.

This is the answer to them: Pray God’s promises; crack open the bible, find a promise, and pray it!

In doing that, you start to learn the language of prayer.

Let me ask you this: do you remember how you learned how to speak words?

Did you learn it because you studied up on english textbooks while sipping on a baby bottle of milk?

No, we learned how to speak because language was first spoken to us.

“We learn language only as we are spoken to.”<sup>18</sup>

God’s promises are how we can learn the language of prayer.

So Pray God’s Promises, because they are so precious and so great!

I love how Spurgeon describes this: “All the way we have to travel, [the promises] seem to be like a series of stepping-stones across the stream of time, and we may march from one promise to another, and never wet our

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<sup>18</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 49, quoted by Tim Keller, *Prayer; Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 55.

feet all the way from earth to heaven, if we do but know how to keep our eyes open, and to find the right promise to step upon." <sup>19</sup>

Want wisdom, the ability to make godly choices?

God promises in James 1 if we lack wisdom, ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given us.<sup>20</sup>

Do you think you're too far gone in your failing faith that God won't take you back?

God said in Isaiah 57, "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners..."<sup>21</sup>

Are you weary?

God said in Jeremiah 31 "every languishing soul I will replenish."<sup>22</sup>

There are promises of forgiveness for sin,  
...justification for the believer,  
...sanctification for the one struggling with sin,  
...supply of every need,  
...of guidance  
...preservation,  
...peace,  
...joy,  
...hope,  
...love,  
...victory,  
...and so much more!

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Spurgeon, "All the Promises," in *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 12:367.

<sup>20</sup> James 1:5

<sup>21</sup> Is 57:18-19

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 31:25

But how do I know which ones to pray when? In what circumstances?  
If there are so many, how can I find the right one?

You may have already noticed in your bulletin there is this insert; please pull that out.

I put this together for our church family; it is a list of 71 different promises from God listed out based on your personal circumstances.

It ranges from righteous longings for growth in godliness, missions, to needs of provision, to wrestling with doubt and fear, suffering, burdens, or struggling with sin.

My hope for you would be to keep this with you in your bible to utilize during your devotions so as to help you pray God's promises back to him.

There are extra copies of this out in the hallway if you want to give it to friends or family.

If you want to go even deeper into this there are books I can recommend to you as well.

## **Conclusion (Cast Vision):**

Let me close with this...

Research shows that people spend about \$130 billion on gift cards every year, and most likely you either contributed or received a fraction of that amount.

Have you used that gift card yet? Maybe, or more likely it's in your purse or wallet along with several other cards.

Research shows that, of the \$130 billion in gift cards bought, roughly \$1 billion doesn't ever get used.<sup>23</sup>

These are benefits that have already been purchased, but never get enjoyed.

It is the same way with God's promises.

All the promises of God are yes in Christ Jesus.  
They have been purchased by Jesus' blood!

There are 3,000 gift cards in your bible worth infinite value to be spent on everything the true believer could ever want.

Go and get them and you will get everything you're asking for in Jesus' name.<sup>24</sup>

[Enter into a time of corporate prayer]

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<sup>23</sup> "\$1 billion in gift cards go unused every year — here's how to avoid that" [MarketWatch.com](https://www.marketwatch.com/story/1-billion-in-gift-cards-go-unused-every-year-heres-how-to-avoid-that-2016-12-30), published January 1, 2018, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/1-billion-in-gift-cards-go-unused-every-year-heres-how-to-avoid-that-2016-12-30>.

<sup>24</sup> Illustration from J.D. Greear, "Pray God's Words Back to Him: Claiming the Promises of God" (J.D. Greear Ministries, entry posted April 4, 2013, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://jdgrear.com/blog/pray-gods-words-back-to-him-claiming-the-promises-of-god/>).