

A Change in Plans
2 Corinthians 1:18-20
Part 3

When I was growing up my father would quite often share with me stories from his life. Many of the stories that he shared with me, I believe, were shared with me in order to convey his value system and what he believed to be important.

His stories focused on the value of hard work. His stories focused on the importance of being a man of your word. His stories focus on the dangers of certain vices such as drinking and smoking. Did I value these stories? Yes! Did I profit from these stories? Yes, I believe I did. Even today when I visit my father he will turn to me and say, "Did I ever tell you this story." My dad was and has always been a storyteller.

But there was one story that I cannot remember him ever telling me. And what was that story? It was the story of Jesus, or in other words, the gospel story.

And what is the gospel story? That God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten Son into this world to die for our sins so that we through faith in Him and through faith in Him alone we might be saved. This is the gospel story.

The first time I remember hearing this story it resonated with me. It captivated me. My spirit with each word that was spoken was in effect saying, "Amen." The gospel story, the story of Jesus, is the greatest story that has ever been told. And it was through this story that I have come to experience life and life abundant. Is this story special to me? Absolutely! Is this story special to you! Absolutely!

But can we trust it? Can we be assured that the words that have been recorded for us about the person and work of Christ are true? This question brings us back to our study of **2 Corinthians** and more specifically to our study of **2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4** which we started last week.

And the question we are seeking to answer is this: How did Paul respond to the charges against him by certain false teachers that he lacked personal integrity in 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4? This is how he responded.

Paul, first of all, responded to the charges against him by introducing the testimony of his own conscience (2 Corinthians 1:12-14).

We saw this in **2 Corinthians 1:12-14**. So let me read these verses for you. **“For our proud confidence in this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. (13) For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; (14) just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.”** False teachers in Corinth were attacking Paul’s integrity. And they were attacking his integrity by telling the Corinthians that he had changed his travel plans so that he could pursue some kind of hidden self-serving agenda. And how did he initially respond to this charge? He responded to this charge by introducing the testimony of his own conscience. But this was not his only response to the charges against him.

Paul, secondly, responded to the charges against him by denying them (2 Corinthians 1:15-17). We saw this in **2 Corinthians 1:15-17**. So now let me read these verses for you. **“In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; (16) that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. (17) Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”** And what was the answer that Paul expected to this question? He expected their answer to be no!

So did Paul deny the charges that had been made against him? Absolutely! But what is most interesting about his denial is not simply that he denied the charges but how he denied the charges. Paul wanted the Corinthians, based on what they knew about him and what he knew about them, to agree with him that he was not guilty of the charges against him. And Paul truly believed that if they just stopped for a moment and reflected on what they

had come to know about him through their personal contact with him they would have known that the charges against him were false.

But Paul was still not done in responding to these charges that had been made against him for he knew that the false teachers were using the charges they were making against him not only to undermine his reputation but also the message that he had delivered to the Corinthians concerning Christ.

So in light of this, Paul, thirdly, responded to the charges against him by affirming his faithfulness as a messenger of God (2 Corinthians 1:18-22). Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 1:18-22.** **“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. (19) For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. (20) For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. (21) Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, (22) who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as our pledge.”** Now this morning we will only be able to consider **verses 18-20.** But even so I believe the verses that we will consider will be helpful to us.

So, what is my hope for this message this morning? My hope is this: That not only will we once again be reassured of the trustworthiness of the gospel message as it has been delivered to us through the ministry of faithful apostles, but that we also might, by the grace of God, each day say, “amen,” to the truth of the gospel so that not only each day we might remind ourselves of how truly blessed we are through the gospel, but that also we might remind ourselves of the greatness of our God and the love that He has for us.

So let us now in light of this hope look more closely at Paul’s affirmation of his faithfulness as a messenger of God in **2 Corinthians 1:18-22** and see what he had to say? So how did Paul begin in affirming his faithfulness?

First of all, Paul, in affirming his faithfulness as a messenger of God, began by comparing his faithfulness to the faithfulness of God (2 Corinthians 1:18).

Let me now read for you **verse 18** and see if this is not so. **“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.”** In other words, if you trust God and what He has said, then you should be able to trust me and what I have said.

This is an amazing statement, but this is in essence what Paul said to the Corinthians. He saw God’s Word and his word as equally consistent because he believed that he was God’s spokesperson. In other words, he saw himself as an apostle of Christ, as God’s representative speaking the very words that God had given him to speak.

So after making this comparison, Paul then went on to support his claim. And how did he do this? Paul initially supported his claim of faithfulness as a messenger by declaring that the message he had given to the Corinthians was true (2 Corinthians 1:19). So let us first of all look at **verse 19** and consider his declaration.

“For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.” So did Paul in this verse declare that the message that he had given to the Corinthians was true? Yes, Paul did declare it to be true. And why did he? He did it because how could he be considered a faithful messenger of God if the message that he preached to the Corinthians about Christ was not true? And the answer is of course he couldn’t be considered a faithful messenger.

And what is at the heart of this truthful message? It was Christ Himself and that is why Paul said his message was not yes and no but rather yes in Him”

Paul in essence was seeking to turn the attention of the Corinthians from the charges that had been made against him and his lack of trustworthiness back to Jesus, or in other words, to the very one whom he had preached to them. And he did not only by saying that what he preached was “yes” in Him, but he also did this by referring to Jesus, the very one whom he had preached to them in a very unusual way. So how did Paul refer to Jesus?

He referred to him as **“The Son of God, Christ Jesus.”** Isn’t that exactly how Paul referred to Him in **verse 19**? Yes, this is exactly how Paul referred to Him. He didn’t simply refer to Him as Christ Jesus but rather as **“The**

Son of God, Christ Jesus.” And this was not the way he would typically refer to Him. So why would Paul do this?

Throughout the history of the church false teachers had continually threatened to corrupt the teachings of the apostles concerning Christ. And it appears that this may have, in fact, been going on here in Corinth. So rather than just using the title **“Christ Jesus,”** Paul felt it necessary to use a fuller and richer title when referring to Christ, so rather than referring to Him simply as **“Christ Jesus”** he refers to him as **“the Son of God, Christ Jesus.”**

So was Paul alone in preaching to the Corinthians, **“The Son of God, Christ Jesus?”** No! Silvanus and Timothy had done so as well.

Let us go back and read the verse. **“For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.”** So who else besides Paul was sharing with the Corinthians the same things about Christ as Paul? Silvanus and Timothy were sharing the very same things! So who were these men?

Silvanus (Silas) was a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church who later replaced Barnabas as Paul’s traveling companion at the very beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 15:22, 39-40).

Timothy was Paul’s beloved son in the faith who joined up with Paul and Silvanus in Lystra just before they went to the city of Corinth for the first time to preach Christ (Acts 16:1; 18:5).

So was Paul alone in what he said about Christ in Corinth? No! Silvanus and Timothy were also there with him saying the same things about Christ. So had Paul been faithful to share exactly what God had given him to share about Christ to the Corinthians? Yes! And this is what Paul is declaring. Paul in **verse 19** is declaring that everything that he and his companions had said about Christ in Corinth was true and was exactly what God Himself had wanted them to say. But Paul is not done supporting his claim to faithfulness as a messenger of God.

So now let me read for you **2 Corinthians 1:20**. And what does it say? It says this, **“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes;**

therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.” So how did Paul continue to support his claim of faithfulness as a messenger of God to the Corinthians here in this verse?

Paul continued to support his claim of faithfulness as a messenger of God by showing that what he said about Christ complemented what God had said about Christ in the Old Testament (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The many promises of God, given through the mouths of many prophets at different times and in different places, all converge like so many lines at one point, or in other words, at the point of Christ whom Paul, Silvanus and Timothy preached.

There is no yes and no with Christ, as Paul and his companions preached Christ, there was only yes. It was as if God was saying through these men that Christ is my yes to every promise I have ever made. God fulfilled everything that He ever said through the prophets in Christ. This is what Paul in essence meant when he said in **verse 20, “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes.”**

The gospel of Christ, as proclaimed by Paul and his companions, is the final chapter in God’s story, which explained everything, and allows us to see clearly what God had been speaking through the prophets in the Old Testament. The gospel of Christ, as proclaimed by the apostles, is the key to understanding everything that God has done, and is going to do and will do.

But there is another phrase here in **verse 20** that is very interesting that we have not yet considered. So let us now continue to read the verse. **“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”**

What in the world does this mean? The word “amen” is a solemn affirmation of the truthfulness of a statement. So who is solemnly affirming what?

When Paul speaks of our “amen” resulting in glory being brought to God “through us,” he is referring specifically to the Corinthians’ initial “amen” given in response to Paul’s preaching of the gospel.

When Paul first came to Corinth along with Silvanus and Timothy and preached the gospel to the Corinthians they responded with “amen,” or in other words, they responded with a solemn affirmation of those truths that had been proclaimed to them to the glory of God.

When Paul said that Jesus was the Christ, the Corinthians said, “Amen,” to the glory of God. When Paul said that Jesus was the Son of God, the Corinthians said, “Amen,” to the glory of God. When Paul said that Christ had died for their sins according to the Scriptures, the Corinthians said, “Amen,” to the glory of God. When Paul said that Christ, after having been buried, rose again on the third day according to the scriptures, the Corinthians said, “Amen,” to the glory of God.

And that is what happened to me when I first heard the gospel. My spirit hearing the gospel said, “Amen,” to the glory of God.

But we need to say amen to the truths of the God more than once. We need to continually say amen to the truths of the gospel.

Let us again look at **verse 20** but this time we will read the entire verse. **“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him [“was” our Amen, No! This is not what it says. Rather it says] is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”**

Saying amen to the truths of the gospel needs to continue on. This was true for the Corinthians. This was true for Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. And this is true for us as well.

Life is not easy, but may the difficulties of our lives not distract us from our contemplation of the trustworthiness of the gospel of Christ, nor our response to it. Or in other words, may we, like the Corinthians and like Paul and his companions, continually over our lives each and every day say amen to those gospel truths to the glory of God.

Has there ever been a greater story than the story of Jesus and what He did for us on the cross of Calvary. No! Will there ever be a greater story? No! Will we ever get tired of hearing the story? No! Will we ever get tired of sharing the story? No! So let us each and every day dwell on this wonderful story and respond accordingly.

May God give us the grace to say amen each and every day of our lives as we consider the gospel of Christ so that God may through us receive the glory that He is due.