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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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2 CORINTHIANS 1 v 20

"For all the promises of God in Him are yea
and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us"

This beautiful text occurs by the wisdom of God in turning the incredulity of Paul's opponents who accused him of using lightness and making promises just to break them at any rate when it was convenient to him not to fulfil them. "When I therefore was thus minded" - that is, I intended to come to you by Macedonia and to come again out of Macedonia unto you and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea; that was my purpose; when I purposed this - "did I use lightness" Was it a kind of light resolve to be turned aside by any little thing that might come to hinder or did I do it according to the will of God, and a set purpose to magnify Him in preaching among you? Yea, yea, was my word, not nay, nay. Not this and that, but only that. "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay". This brings him to preach again the person whose glory was dear to him. "For 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." The gospel in Christ, the truth in Christ, the sweetness of righteousness and of holiness preached by me was just yea, absolute. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

A promise is a foreword, a word relating to the future, a word given to someone or more concerning what is to be done, what shall be done, or a promise of gift. It is a foreword; it goes before performance. That will be true in you, in me, if ever we get a word of promise, and it should say this, do not expect the fulfilment immediately. The Scripture shows that generations were between the giving of the promise and its fulfilment. This we see in Genesis when God, cursing the devil, declared that the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, should bruise his head and destroy the works of the devil. That was 4000 years before Christ actually came. It is significant I

think that the first promise God spake was in the very place where sin was committed and the promise will come to you, if it does come to you, where your sin is, where you are a sinner. It must be that way. If God promises good to your soul, your soul will be under a sense of sin, under some realisation of the curse which you have merited. Then it will be, and only then, and only thus, that the glory of God will shine in your heart and eyes that He should give a promise to such a person, to such a sinner.

Promises are wonderful expressions of the will of God, manifestations of the love of God, declarations of the purposes of God. They are for the present, they are for the future. They belong to this life and to the life to come. The promises of God are promises of this life and of the life to come; promises relating to body and soul; relating to circumstances, temptations, afflictions. Promises of help, of support, of protection, of preservation, and of glory to come. Wide promises, full promises, absolute promises, without a condition in regard of salvation, without one single hint of a condition in regard of salvation. All of them are yea and amen and all of them are in the Person of Christ. Very observable this, "All the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him amen." God never did, God never will, give a good gift to a sinful person out of Christ; all in Him. And as this is declared, so may it have our attention. It is worthy of attention. The gospel, that is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ, is worthy of God; worthy of His perfections, of His love, of His goodness, of His wisdom, and of His power. "God was in Christ" - a remarkable utterance; in Christ - "reconciling the world unto Himself". You will get nothing, but by Christ if you are Christians, and you will be glad to be empty enough for Him from time to time, though the emptying process is very painful and bitter to a proud heart.

The nature of the promises, let us for a moment look at. The nature of them we may say is, first of all, absolute; without a condition laid on the people to whom they are made. "I will bless". What a word - "In blessing I will bless thee". What a promise, think of it.

Second, the promise is full of love, full of love and a

singular way, remarkable and exhibiting the infinite wisdom and goodness of God in love. He likens His love to the love of a man to an unworthy woman, "Go yet" said He, to Hosea "love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel" (Hosea 3 v 1) You love a woman unworthy of love and that shall express my love to unworthy people. Did any of you to whom God has spoken feel yourselves worthy of God? Did you ever think you ought to have it? No. And the more clearly, graciously, and powerfully the Lord has spoken to you, the more unworthy you have felt; the deeper and sweeter has been your repentance. Nothing humbles like God's goodness. Nothing melts us into sweet nothingness like God's love. Nothing makes us realise our utter unworthiness like His condescension. The condescension of one man to another may be irritating, but the condescension of God to a sinner provokes loathing of himself, repentance before God.

Third, the promise of God is a full promise. There is no need that ever can come to one to whom a promise is made that will be found outside that promise. All that you need for time with its vicissitudes, necessities, temptations, weakness, fear; all that you can need the promise has in it; more than anyone ever found himself believing at the time. I never believed when God spoke to me more than 60 years ago a certain promise, that it contained what I have proved it since then to have contained. You will never get to the bottom, you will never empty a promise. It is full and it is powerful; that is to say, God is in it. One point in the faith of Abraham, as we are told in the Romans, is this: he counted that God was able to do what He had promised. Have you done that? You will receive the fulfilment as from death often, and sometimes your faith will go to Him and put Him in mind, not only of the promise, but of the ability which is in Him to fulfil it. Jacob did this: "Thou didst say". Lord I am afraid of Esau my brother, but Thou didst say return to thy country and I will be with thee; now fulfil it. You need never be afraid of putting God in mind of a promise which He has given to you. Whatever He has said to you, go to Him about, put Him in mind of it. He wont be offended. How long will it be ere ye believe Me? may be more likely spoken to you than any other word, when you are in unbelief. "All the promises".

And lastly on this point the promises pledge God. Is it not wonderful that the infinite God should pledge Himself to a worm, and that the character of God is wrapped up with the safety, the holiness, the justification, and glorification of the sinner to whom the promise is made? You cannot fail. If you can fail to whom God has given a promise His character can be broken. His promise, His oath, He has engaged to save the meanest, the weakest, and poorest saint on earth.

Now if this little word about the promise of God should be acceptable to any of you, and find a little efficacy in you, give Him thanks for the promise. "All the promises of God in Him are yea" It would not be difficult for you to promise a friend or a child what you had no power to perform. You might sincerely promise it, and God in His providence might say, you shall not fulfil it, but that can never apply to Him. If He promised you the whole earth you should have it. He has promised you something better than that. He has promised you heaven if He has promised you anything.

"In Him". Let us notice this. "In Him". I have said, and I have often said it to you, here in Him is God, Jesus Christ. Whatever is proper to God, eternity, immensity, omnipotence, omniscience, Jesus Christ possesses. Worthy Him, in Him. In Him is the wisdom of God. After that in the wisdom of God the world knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Where is this foolish preaching? The preaching of Christ. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, to the Greeks foolishness". But though it was esteemed a stumblingblock and foolishness to men, the gospel is not foolishness. It is not the gospel that is foolish; it is the judgement of men about it that is foolish. The wisdom of God is in Him, infinite wisdom in the constitution of the Person of Christ, and is He not suitable? Absolute Deity would be our destruction in a moment if God were to deal with us in that regard. I have more than once named to you what I like to think of myself; what I met with in my youth when I was reading Luther's prayer. "O God keep me from an absolute God, from a God out of Christ." If you meet with God out of Christ it will be your damnation. If you meet with God in Christ you will be saved. If He meets you in Christ He will kiss you and Christ will kiss you and the

Holy Ghost will kiss you; that is to say you will have peace and love in your soul. "In Him".

"In Him" as the representative of God to men. What a wonder that God should condescend to represent Himself as love and kindness and wisdom and power to sinful men; as the representative of God to His people; that He should show Himself to be kind and good and wise and forgiving, all in this Person, Christ. You will always be finding you are unworthy, and you will, in the measure of that experience, be finding from time to time that your worthiness before God is Christ; no addition is needed here. When we are exhorted to walk worthy of God it is not in regard of salvation but in regard of our conduct. The worthiness that God accepts in the place of, and for, sinners, is in Him. How worthy Christ is of God. Every part and particle of the gospel, wherein God is freely justified, is worthy of God. The death of Christ was worthy of God, because the incarnation of the Son of God, when He condescended to assume the holy, spotless, miraculously born, body prepared of His Father was worthy of God. The conception was worthy of God, the birth was worthy of God, the nature was worthy of God. Now if we are there in Him, then the worthiness which God claims and demands and will have in His people through eternity will be found there in Him. O sinner, you mourn, and rightly mourn your infirmities, and ugliness of sin before God, but in Christ none of that stands, none of that appears. Look at Jacob as he was a man, look on Jacob's posterity. What do you see? Imperfection. View Jacob in Christ and then Balaam's words are beautiful: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel". Promises in Him have all virtue; great, exceeding great and precious promises. What virtue there is in them. Why a promise may often be a good meal to you for your soul. O, when faith feeds on a promise it feeds on wholesome food. There is virtue for nourishment in a promise and there is light in a promise. The promise brings God to light. It reveals His goodness to you, it reveals His power to you, it reveals His intention to you. There is nourishment for you, there is light for you, there is strength in the promise. It will be a girdle for your loins, a light to your feet, a lamp to your path. It will show you to whom to go for all you need. It will tell you you need nothing that the world has. You have, in a promise, God, and in Him everything.

"Yea", certain, absolute. If you had the world you could not have certainty with it. No certainty in the world. If you had life, all life, and long life, what of that? What is your life, it is even a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" That is life. But if you have the life of God in a promise, you have what is unlimited, everlasting. "Yea". Do you need help? "I will help thee", says Jehovah in Christ. Do you need wisdom? "I am wisdom" "I wisdom dwell with prudence" "I am understanding", and My words "are all plain to him that understandeth and right to them that find knowledge." (Proverbs 8) "Yea". Do you need guidance? "I will guide thee with Mine eye". Do you need protection? "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty". The shadow of Christ's mediation, the shadow of the Rock, the shadow of His blood, the shadow of the gospel. O what a protection. You need deliverance. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" "I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." Promises abound everywhere in the Word of God, and where you find the promise, mark this, where you find the promise you will find need, you will find a sinner. You can go to the beach here and quickly get a load of beach; it costs you little. But if you are to have a promise you will get into necessity, hard necessity. Weakness, folly, and every kind of need, and then how the promise will fit you. O how the promise will fit you. You may say sometimes in simplicity, the Lord could not have found a word more suitable to me; He knew what you would need. His promise is a covering word. "Yea". It belongs to this life. "Having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come". The promise of the life that now is means not only bread and water; it means everything; meeting every incident, accident, necessity, fear, trouble, temptation. Everything that can befall you, every need that can come to you, the promise contains a supply for. O happy the people who have the promise of God. "Yea and in Him Amen". Let it be so. Who says Amen here? Paul by inspiration says it. Who inspired him to say it? God; the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. It means, sinner, I have spoken to you and what I have said shall be fulfilled. "Amen". And the heart that receives a promise says, Amen, let it be so, Lord. You can add nothing to it, and would not detract anything from it, in the fulfilment. Now Solomon dedicating the temple said, among other good things, not one word of His good promise hath failed. (1 Kings 8 v 56) When you come to reckon

up, at times, and particularly it will be so when you come to the end, you will join, not with Solomon only, but more particularly in this point, with Joshua - Not one word of all His good promise hath failed. A grand reckoning; it brings in so many things. You go back in your memory to certain times of necessity and say, I lacked nothing. At those times I lacked nothing. If Christ were to say to you what He said to His returned disciples at the end of their mission - "Lacked ye anything?" you would say, nothing. Bread was given, water was sure, friends were raised up, Christ came, the Spirit came, truth came, light shined, mercy fell on my spirit, and all from the promise. The promise gives a view of God, a view of His fullness. Able to do it. A beautiful word concerning Abraham's faith, accounting that God was able to do it. Faith rises to this sometimes. "I believe God is able to give me what He has promised." It may seem to you that a miracle must be performed if the promise is made good. And what of that? If a miracle were necessary He would do it. There is nothing too hard for God. "Yea and Amen", still in Christ. Nothing out of Him. O no, the Alpha, the beginning; Omega, the ending.

"Unto the glory of God by us". Now here is a word that may trouble some of you, may trouble me. "Unto the glory of God by us". You may say, but I do not glorify Him. It does not mean that. First of all it means this, that when God fulfils a promise in you, to you, whatever that may be, He is therein glorified. You stand in the fulfilment of the promise to His glory. It is a work, as it were, in you, making you a monument of His honour and praise and glory. His character is vindicated in you, His love is made good in you, His power is made good in you, His faithfulness is made good in you. This, I apprehend, is what is intended here. "Unto the glory of God by us". Now we are poor creatures. If we know ourselves, if we feel what we really are, ashamed of ourselves, we may at times find it difficult even to believe that God can be glorified in us. I know what I am saying. So far as I am concerned, I understand that difficulty. Then how can this be? I repeat it, when God fulfils in you what He has promised, that is for His glory. "Unto the glory of God by us". This has always been so. How He was glorified in the first Apostolic churches. When unbelievers were made believers, when idolators were made believers in Jesus Christ, and worshippers of Him; when some took their costly books, worth so many thousand pieces of silver and

burnt them in the market place, that was to the glory of God. God fulfilled the gospel promise to gather them to Himself, and this brought glory to His great Name. And when any sinner now is blessed in any way in the gospel and separated from the world, brought to Christ, brought to that close and solemn business to deny himself, lose his life, save it by losing it, hate it and love it by hating it, then the promise of God to be glorified in His people is made good. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Be careful of your walk, dear, believing friends. Endeavour to walk worthy of the profession you make. Be careful of your words, of your conduct, of your spirit. Leave everything behind you that would stand between you and God. All this belongs to the duty that God puts on His people in respect of their conduct. But when you come to the glory that is spoken of in the text, look elsewhere. Work as much as you can but look elsewhere for this glory. Look to God to fulfil His promise in you. That, as I understand it, is intended here. He is to be glorified in His work, He is to be glorified in His dealings with you. The other things I have named are your dealings before and with Him. The two are to be distinguished because they are different. All the promises of God in Christ, given to Christ for His people, given to Him that He may speak them to their hearts. Grace poured into His lips that He may pour that grace out in the form of the gospel and promises. They are in Him, yea. No twisting, no weakness. No giving way here and there because of difficulties. "Yea and Amen". "He shall not fail nor be discouraged". "Unto the glory of God by us". And here, as far as I can see, lies the stability, the goodness, the wisdom, the standing of the church of God - in the promises. The Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ; the fullness of that Person, the greatness of that Person, the glory of that Person, Jesus Christ, all involved in the promise of God. What a dreadful thing it is not to have an interest in the promise. What poverty it is to have no interest in the promise. What riches it is to be interested in the promise.

AMEN.