

Dear GOD



Connect group questions

Dear God, how can I trust your promises?

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

1. Why do people sometimes find it hard to trust God's promises?
2. Have there been times when you've wondered whether God keeps or will keep his promises?
3. Re Mark's sad story of Judy claiming her healing: how had she misunderstood God's promises?
Mark said that in regard to God's promises, we need to look to:

HIS RECORD

4. Read that section of Mark's sermon. Does anything stand out for you about the promises Mark reminded us about?
5. What is it about the track record of God's promises, that ought to give us confidence in trusting his promises?

HIS CHRIST

6. "No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ." What does this mean?
7. Read about the new covenant as the prophet Jeremiah lays it out for us in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Explore how the Lord brought these promises about, through the work and ministry of the Lord Jesus.
8. What did Mark say about preachers and ministers who make little or no reference to Jesus in their preaching and teaching?

HIS SPIRIT

9. Read again our 2 Corinthians 1 passage (vv20-22). Read also 2 Corinthians 5:5 and Ephesians 1:13-14. Recall the teaching on God's seal of ownership and his deposit guaranteeing what is to come. Do you understand what is being taught in these verses?
10. In what ways do you see the Holy Spirit actively at work in your life? Does this assure you that God is real and that his promises can be trusted? Does his work in you, guarantee in your mind, God's future plans for your inheritance – the new heavens and the new earth?

HIS WORD

11. How can we best know what promises we can claim (and take strength from) as our own?
12. How can we have increasing confidence that God will keep his promises?

13. A Christian friend from church says to you: "I struggle to know what promises God has made to me, and what difference they will make in my life". How would you try to encourage them?

14. What will you take away from this message/these passages?

Pray that by looking at God's track record in promise keeping, looking at his Christ in whom all his promises are 'yes'; looking at his Spirit whose work in our lives is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance, and looking at God's word; we may find ourselves resting deeply in the promises of God.

Date: 1st September 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewanin and Peregian
Series: Dear God
Title: How can I trust your promises?
Passage: 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

Outline:

1. **His record**
2. **His Christ**
3. **His Spirit**
4. **His Word**

Introduction

- “Dear God, how can I trust your promises?”
- This is Richard.
- Richard died last week, aged 80, but **23 years ago**, when he was **57**; his wife, Judy who was 50 – was **dying**.
- She had **cancer**. I can’t remember now where it started.
- They were married late and had two **children** when Judy was **ill** – a girl around **15** and a boy around **18**.
- Judy and Richard were very involved in our church... Judy was the **Scripture Union rep** in our parish – promoting their **daily reading notes** for all ages.
- Judy regularly told me that she was **claiming** her **healing**.
- She believed God had promised **her that she would be healed** and that all she had to do was **believe it** and **claim it** and it would be **hers**.
- We were never allowed to discuss the possibility that she may **not** be healed... and when I prayed ‘nevertheless, Lord, not **our** will but **yours** be done’ I was **frowned on** because it even **contemplated** that it may not be God’s will to heal her. /
- Tragically, when Judy died, she felt **ashamed** and **embarrassed** and that she had let her **family** and **friends** down... It was **clearly** – or so she thought - her **lack of faith** which had resulted in her **not being healed**. //
- When I preached at her funeral, I gently chided her circle of friends (who weren’t from **our** church, but **another** church) who had been telling her to ‘**claim** her **healing**’
- I told the congregation that Judy had **NOT** died because of her **lack of faith**; and that God had not failed **Judy** nor **us**... Judy had not read in God’s word, that he would specifically bring healing to her!
- ...I made it clear that the healing God promises is (a) the healing of our broken **relationship** with **him** and (b) that **complete physical** healing when we receive our **new bodies** in **eternity**.
- **Can we trust God’s promises? Is he reliable?**
- **What promises can we claim as our own?**
- Well – perhaps my answer won’t surprise you: it is a resounding ‘yes!’
- And I want to **convince** you of this and **strengthen** your **resolve** to **trust God’s promises** by looking with you at:
 1. **His record**
 2. **His Christ**
 3. **His Spirit**
 4. **His Word**

1. HIS RECORD

- I want to remind you of God’s track **record** in keeping **promises**.
- He promised that from **Abraham** could come a great nation... that he would bless them with **land**... and that this nation would in turn be a blessing to **others**... **delivered**
- God promised that he would be Israel’s **God** and that they would be his **people** – his **treasured possession**... **delivered**

- He promised **Moses** that he would rescue his people from the cruel slavery of the Egyptians... **delivered**.
- He promised **Joshua** that he would go before him and be with him wherever he goes as they crossed the Jordan and went into the **promised land**... **delivered**.
- He promised that there would be a **King** who would come in the line of King **David** who would restore relationship with God's people and whose **righteous reign** will never **end**... **delivered**
- He promised that if we **search** for him, we will find him... that he is near us whenever we pray to him... **delivered**...
- But he also promises that when we make him our **shepherd**, all our needs will be **met** in him – that he will be with us in the **valley** of the **shadow** of death – and that we will **dwell** with him for **ever**...
- He promises to be our **refuge** and **strength**
- He promises to **watch over** our **coming** and **going**...
- He promises **salvation** to all who believe in his Son... that all things work for the **good** for those who love him... that he will be our **comfort** in our **trials**... that his **grace** will be sufficient for our **challenges**.... That he is able to do more than either we can **ask** or **imagine**...
- he promised his **Holy Spirit** to those who trust in **Jesus**... who **transforms** us and gives us gifts whereby we can minister to one another...
- he promises us an **inheritance** that will never **spoil, perish or fade**...
- he promises a **room** in his Father's **house**...
- he promises **abundant life** and that he is the **way** the **truth** the **life**...
- He promises that the work he has **started** in us, he will bring to **completion**...
- He promises that his great **plan** for the **world** is to bring **everything** under the **reign** of **Christ**...
- He promises us **armour** for the **spiritual battle** in which we **find ourselves**...
- He promises that when we seek first his **kingdom**, he will supply all our needs of **food, clothing, shelter**...
- He promises to **care** for us when we cast all our **cares** on **him**...
- He promises us **peace** that passes understanding when we take everything to him in **prayer**...
- He promises **Jesus** is coming **back** to bring **justice** and **end evil** and usher in the **new heavens and the new earth**... ///
- How's he **going** with his promises?
- What's **your testimony**?
- **Some** of those are yet to be fulfilled... they're **still coming**...
- But **my** testimony is that God's **track record** speaks for **itself**...
- Our God is a promise-**making** – promise **keeping** God.
- **Everything** he has promised to us **has** been **delivered!** – or **is** being delivered... or **WILL** be delivered...
- God is **good** for his promises... and we have only just scratched the **surface** this morning!
- **How** can you trust God's promises? By looking firstly, to his **record**; and then second, to his **Christ** //

2. HIS CHRIST

- Now let's turn to 2 Corinthians 1 and v20 – have a look with me - *no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.*
- It's a strange turn of phrase... what does it mean?
- From the **gospels**, we understand that after Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus opened the **Scriptures** to his **disciples** and **opened** their **minds**, so they could see all that was said in the Scriptures concerning what? – concerning // **himself**.
- I've explained **regularly** that the Old Testament points us forward to the **coming** of the **Lord Jesus**....
- And **everything** promised in the **Old Testament**, finds fulfilment in **Christ**.

- Does God promise to put a **new heart within**?
- That happens through the **work of Christ**
- Does he promise that he will **forgive sins** and remember them no **more**? That happens through **Christ**
- Does he promise a new **covenant**?
- That happens through **Christ**
- Does he promise that he will put his **law** in our **minds** and write it on our **hearts**?
- That happens as **Christ** dwells in our **hearts**...!
- Does he promises to **remake** us in his **image**? That happens through the work of **Christ**
- Does he promise a new **heavens** and a new **earth** where all evil is **gone**?
- That will only happen because of the work of Christ winning **victory** over evil at the **cross** and **resurrection**!
- All God's promises are '**yes**' in **Christ Jesus**!
- **All** the promises of **God** for the **good** of his people **focus** in **Christ**.
- Someone has said "**Every** sinner who comes to God in **Christ**, with all his **needs**, finds **God** coming to him in **Christ**, with all his **promises**."
- When a **sinful** person meets the **holy** God IN **CHRIST**, what he hears is **YES**.
- Do you **love** me? YES.
- Will you **forgive** me? YES.
- Will you **accept** me? YES. YES.
- Will you help me **change**? YES.
- Will you give me power to **serve** you? YES.
- Will you **hang on to me**? YES.
- Will you **protect** me and **strengthen** me? YES
- Will you show me your **glory**? YES.
- All the **promises** of **God** – all the **blessings** of God in the **heavenly realms** – are **YES** and made possible **through Christ Jesus**.
- Jesus is God's decisive **YES** to all who **believe**. //
- Friends... this is why a **Christ-less** Christianity is not **Christianity**.
- Ministers who leave Jesus out of their preaching or their understanding of what ministry is about... where there's no mention of **Jesus** or the gospel... have not yet grasped that **all God's promises** centre on **Jesus**!
- Yes all God's **purposes**, his **plans**, his **promises** are all focused on **Jesus**... all **fulfilled – delivered / through Jesus**... /
- Jesus is the **sure sign** - the **guarantee** – that we can **trust** God's **promises**... ! //
- **How** can you trust God's promises?
- His **record**; his **Christ** and **third**:

3. HIS SPIRIT

- Look with me again from 2 Corinthians 1 – let's pick it up again at v20 - *no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. ²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*
- Many large companies have an asset register – everything in the office is labelled with a number related back to the register... it demonstrates **ownership** and that whatever the item is belongs where it does.... God has set his seal of **ownership** on **you**... by his Spirit...
- governments on official **documents**... set their **seal** on them to show they are **official** and are for **real**.. they have a mark of **authenticity**...

- God has set his **seal of ownership** on us – that we are **his** – and his is **ours** – it's kind of like a **branding** if you like – **YOU ARE MINE...**
- And then he puts his **Spirit** – the **Holy Spirit** – the Spirit of the **Lord Jesus** – **within** our hearts...
- ...so we can say that **everyone** here this morning – who loves **Jesus** – who is a **Christian** – everyone who has said 'yes' to Jesus... has that **seal** and are indwelt by **God's Holy Spirit...**!
- ...who helps us to understand who **Jesus is**, inclines our heart to **surrender** to him; helps us **recognise our sin** and **repent** of our sin; **gifts** us for ministry so we can serve one another as the body of Christ... and **transforms** our very **character** so that we demonstrate all the **fruit** of the **Spirit** of joy, love, gentleness, peace, self-control etc...
- AND that Holy Spirit's **work in us...** the **closeness** we **feel** to Jesus.. the **shaping** and **transforming** of our **character** – the **pruning**... the **training**... the **equipping**... is a **guarantee** that **God is at work...** and is a **deposit** of what is to **come...** //
- Of **WHAT** to come? Our **being remade – restored** – in the **image** of the **Lord Jesus...** AND our **inheritance** in the new **creation!** /
- He says the same thing later in this same letter to the Corinthians – 2 Cor 5:5 – *God, [who] has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*
- And again in Ephesians 1:13-14 – *When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.*
- The Spirit's work in our lives... is the **deposit** of all our inheritance in the **new heavens** and new **earth...** ///
- **How** can we trust God's **promises?**
- His **record**, his **Christ**, his **Spirit** and finally:

4. HIS WORD

- Psalm 119:105 – *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*
- Let's take a step back and ask – why would someone find it **hard** to trust God's promises?
- Perhaps because they feel God has failed to **keep a promise.**
- Perhaps they feel **let down** by God in a certain circumstance.
- It might be because they've **claimed** a promise that wasn't actually made to them **directly.**
- That was the great sadness about **Judy** – the story I started with this morning... God promises a **general healing** at the end of time in the **new creation...** and **all** Jesus' healing miracles were an **anticipation** of that... and **sometimes** – yes – the Lord **does** heal today in **remarkable** and **wonderful ways** – but Judy claimed for **herself**, a promise God had not actually **make** to **her...** her **misguided**, albeit well-meaning **friends**, did not rightly **handle** and **apply** the **word** of God!
- There **were** however, a whole bunch of **other** promises God **has made** that Judy **could have claimed** – we recalled some of them earlier – such that God is our **refuge and strength** and a very present help... that God's **presence** will be with her in the **valley of the shadow of death**; that the Lord who is the **maker of heaven and earth** was her **helper**... that our **light and momentary troubles** were achieving an **eternal glory** that will far outshine them **all**, that God's **grace** was **sufficient** for her... I could go on... //
- There are some among us here today who are **unwell...** battling **cancer...** so **many** promises for you to cling on to... I've just named **some** of them... keep **going**... you're **amazing**... and witness to us **how** to keep trusting God's promises... //
- **How** can we trust God's promises?
- By returning to the **Word of God.**
- When we read here, that God's word is a **lamp** for our **feet** and a **light** to our **path**, the Psalmist is reminding us that it is the **Word of God** which **illuminates** the **way** for us.
- It is as we read God's word and see what his promises **are**, **AND** how he **keeps** his promises, then we will in **turn**, be helped to **trust** those promises made **to** and **for** us.

- When we read God's word, we see the **trustworthy character** of God.
- We get to **know** him, and we trust that he is **for** us and not **against** us.
- How do you trust that your **spouse** will keep their promises – or your **good friend or dear sister or brother**?
- It is as they **reveal** themselves to you over time as a **promise keeping, faithful, loyal** person who would **never** let you **down!**
- That's **exactly** how it is with God, and the way we get to **know** God's character is through by his **Word**. And the way we get to know all his precious **promises** for us – is by the **light** of his **Word**. //
- May the Lord in his **kindness**, grant you such an **insight** into his **character**, that you come to a place when you **never** doubt his promises **again**, but rather, you **know** what they **are**, and **rest** in them **deeply**.

- **How** can we trust God's promises?
- By:
- His **record** – he has kept all his promises... the only outstanding promise that is yet to be delivered is the **return of Jesus to end evil once for all** by his **judgement** and usher in the **new heavens and the new earth...**
- His **Christ** – the one who fulfils all God's promises – they all find their '**yes**' in **Christ Jesus**
- His **Spirit** – whose current work in our lives is the **guarantee** and **deposit** of all that is **yet to come...**
- And his **Word** – through which we come to know the very **nature** of **God** and trust him **deeply** as a **promise-making, promise-keeping God**.