

# God's Yes

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right. We would have had more youth raising their hands that have been there. My kids, I don't know how many people are out sick today, but my wife and my two older boys are just laid out with some fever. So I'm sure that's a lot of that going around this week as well.

But anyways, glad that you guys are here with us and you guys are happy and healthy and hopefully also just enjoying the summer. There was this threat of a tropical storm. I'm guessing it's just like procrastinating and procrastinating.

Know if it will ever hit us, but I'm thankful that we are not meeting underneath a heavy downpour right now. It is beautiful and sunny and hot.

So those of you who don't know me, my name is Jesse Kinzer. I am one of the pastors and a part, just have the privilege of being part of an amazing leadership team here at One Harbor in New Bern.

And if you are new with us, also we are so glad you are here. We are in a series going through the book of 2 Corinthians, which is a letter written by Paul and the Apostle Paul to a church located in a city called Corinth, hence Corinthians.

[ 1 : 10 ] And so today we're going to be reading 2 Corinthians. We're going to be in chapter 1. We're going to be looking at verses 12 to 22. And before we just jump into it, I just want to remind us that this letter is written by the Apostle Paul and it's a very deeply personal letter.

Actually, a lot of scholars would look at it and say, man, this is probably the most personal letter that Paul ever wrote about. And he's writing to this church that he started, but it's also a church that since he had started it and left to go to other places to preach the gospel, they had drifted from the gospel and really just gone off the rails into all sorts of craziness.

And their behaviors weren't aligned to the gospel. They were suing one another, taking each other to court, literally. Like, how about that? Being in a church where we're suing one another. Wouldn't that be fun?

They're sinning openly. And some of their sins, Paul writes to them, some of your sins, like even unbelievers. In Corinth, a very sexualized, promiscuous, licensed city, they would look at what you're doing and be embarrassed about what you're doing, okay?

And then there's all these other things that they're doing of abuse and misuse of God's grace. And so Paul writes to address those things. We kind of see a lot of it in 1 Corinthians, but he's got to write another letter, kind of a follow-up letter.

[ 2 : 33 ] He's writing to address, correct those things because of how much he loves this church. He's just not from afar saying like, you guys better figure it out. Your problem, not mine.

No, he loves them. But somewhere along the way, this church, they actually started to question Paul's affections for them. And probably even his trustworthiness as an apostle of Jesus and his message.

And it seems like one of the contributing factors to that was that Paul had changed his travel plans on them. And so they took it as a slight against them.

They took offense against that. And so Paul doesn't write that off. He actually takes time to address it. And that's some of what we're reading in this passage today. You'll see it come through. But he sees their misreading of his change of plans as actually a bigger issue.

It's actually a misunderstanding of the gospel. And so let's jump into 2 Corinthians 1, verse 12. It says this, For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience.

[ 3 : 39 ] Paul is talking about him and his team. Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity.

Not by earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God, and supremely so towards you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand. And I hope you will fully understand.

Just as you did partially understand us, that on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will boast of us as we will boast of you. Now, in Paul's defense of himself, he is saying, Man, I haven't changed. You're saying I'm a different guy. You're saying I've evolved. Or all of a sudden, like, my love and affections towards you has diminished. He's saying, I haven't changed. And he reveals something important.

In his defense of himself, he also reveals something important about the connection of life and faith. Those two things. And this is what he is pointing at in these passages, in these verses we just read. [ 4 : 39 ] But your life reveals what you really boast in. Paul starts out with this. For our boast is in this. It's good to know that, like, it's okay to be braggadocious about something.

We just have to boast in the right things. Paul invites them to consider the one and a half years that he was with them in Corinth. He's saying, Man, remember what we were like.

Remember what I was like. And notice what his boasting is in here. He's not boasting about, remember those amazing sermons I gave to you guys? How eloquent I was.

Remember the amazing signs and wonders and healings I did? He's not appealing to those things. Look it. He appeals to weakness. Just like he did, we saw in the first 11 verses. His appeal is to weakness.

He's boasting in weakness again. He says, We behaved with simplicity and godly sincerity. Now, those are very two interesting words because in their original language, one means to be a garment without folds in it.

[ 5 : 41 ] So basically, like, think of a blanket that is laid flat out. There's no folds. It's not folded. You can see everything. And the other word literally means to be judged by the light of the sun.

Right? So you can look at us, Paul is saying. You can remember we held nothing back from you. We were fully disclosed. We were open. Our gospel message is, it was available to you.

We hid nothing. We kept nothing back of that message from you. And you know what? Neither did we with our lives. How we lived toward you. And he says, We did this supremely so.

There's nothing hidden, guys. There's nothing left for you to learn about us. We have no secret agenda here. Our message hasn't changed. It hasn't evolved since we've been with you.

And guess what? Neither has our behavior. We are not complex people. Our message is not a complex thing. It's actually very simple and straightforward. And Paul says, That's our boast. That is our boast.

[ 6 : 41 ] First, what does our life, what does your life say you are boasting in? In my mid-20s, I was at a men's breakfast at the church I was at then.

And the mic was being passed around. There's probably about 100 guys in the room. And everyone was supposed to get a turn on the mic to say one word or phrase that described their dad.

And so you had guys saying, My dad's loving. He's patient. He loves Jesus. He's sacrificial. He's hardworking. You know, the typical stuff. And then suddenly, a kid just yells out, Republican.

And you just see the dad next to him go, What does your life say you are boasting in? Now, here's another son.

Leif Peterson, his father was Eugene Peterson, who recently died. And Eugene Peterson, if you don't know him, he pastored at the same church for 50 years.

[ 7 : 38 ] He was the guy who wrote the message. And this is what his son said about him at his funeral. He used to joke with his dad and say, Dad, you really only had one sermon, one message.

And they didn't know how simple it all was. They were blind to your secret. Now, I know you got up on Sundays and you would exposit the word and you would bring truths out and rich truths.

But he's saying, no, no, no. He said, Leif said he knew his father's secret because he had been telling him and showing it for 50 years. For 50 years, Leif said, you stole into my room at night and whispered softly to my sleeping head the same message over and over.

God loves you. He's on your side. He's coming after you. He's relentless. What does your life say you are boasting in?

Eugene Peterson, guys, he wasn't special. He didn't have something extra than you and I have. He just lived by God's grace. The apostle Paul and his friends weren't special.

[ 8 : 48 ] Paul confesses this. He says that, hey, our behavior wasn't according to earthly wisdom. Meaning like, we weren't clever. That's not how we pulled this off. He says it was by the grace of God.

It was by God's empowering grace. And when you live by God's grace, he's going to lead you into a life that begins to preach one message.

And that isn't boring. Actually, that is powerful. Because when your boast is consistent, when your boast is about that one thing, it becomes more clear to others what you believe.

And that's what Paul's getting at. He says in verse 13, For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand, present tense. What you read and understand now.

And I hope, I hope one day you will fully understand, speaking into the future, just as you did partially understand us, looking back to the past.

[ 9 : 49 ] That on the day of the Lord, so that, as you do come into fully understanding us, you know what? You will boast of us. On the day of the Lord Jesus, when he returns, you will boast of us as we will boast of you.

He says to them, this letter that I'm writing, there is nothing new in here. I'm not bringing you new things. I'm just actually just reminding you of who God is and who you are in him.

You've already heard this from us. We've already showed it to you in our lives when we lived among you. You should already understand this. And I know you do understand this. And then Paul concedes the fact that, you know, they got some understanding, but it was partially understood.

Why? Why could he say that to them? Because he could see their conduct wasn't fully aligned with the gospel. There were areas in their life where the gospel says you should be living this way, and they were living this way.

So in one sense, yes, they understood the gospel, but in another, it hadn't fully sunk in to every facet of their heart and their soul. And to be honest, this is where we are all at, me included.

[ 11 : 02 ] I'm not saying this about you guys. This is where we are all growing in the gospel. We are all growing in the gospel. And that should be our life's pursuit as disciples of Jesus.

And here's the thing about the gospel. Can we understand it and yet not fully understand it? Of course. It's as simple and as beautiful that we are saved from our sin by faith in Jesus who died for us. That is the gospel, and that is understanding it.

But the gospel is also at work as we grow in it, going after the idols of our hearts. The sinful desires that remain within us. The false lies that we believe.

The erroneous truth structures that we've built our life around. The gospel wants to get at those things. To expose them and remove them and dismantle them.

And Rigby Wallace, who was just here, if you remember, the guy with the really cool accent from South Africa. He preached here a couple weeks back. And I was saying like, hey, you know, it's been 20 or so years since there's been this really cool movement of God just restoring gospel centrality back to the church.

[ 12 : 04 ] And then I said like, what do you think he's doing next? And he's like, ah, Jesse, hold on. God ain't done with that. We're not even close to God restoring the gospel to us. And I was like, what do you mean?

He said, the gospel's only been partially restored. We are still growing and learning and how to get it to the innermost parts of our soul. And that's the truth.

He says, so like Paul said about himself and his team, that the gospel is meant to come and unfold us. That's what it does in our hearts.

It's meant to come and unfold us and judge us. It shines its light into the dark places, those places that remain. And there are places in our soul.

There's places in my soul that are still beset with sin. That are still holding on and full of shame. Those hidden folds and those dark unreached places, which if they lay undealt with, they foster doubt and lusts and longings and pride and bitterness and hurt and sorrow and disappointments and despair, and the list could go on and on and on.

[ 13 : 17 ] And while we still have folds in our soul, you know what's going to happen. Our conduct will be affected. It will be affected so that our lives will be a confusion of many boasts.

It won't be a clarion sounding and resounding of just one message. And what comes out of us was what the book of James calls being double-minded, literally being double-souled, which in the context of where it is used in the letter James wrote, is he says it's loving two things that are in

opposition to each other.

Because he's saying like, man, you guys are full of passions that are warring it. That's why there's quarreling and fighting among you. You have all these passions and desires, and you want them, and you ask for them, but that's to spend it on yourself.

And then he goes on to say just after that, he's like, guys, you can't be in love with the world. You can't be friendly with the world and still call yourself a friend of God.

Those two things are in opposition to each other. Selfish passions, godly peace, opposition to each other. And the great lie and temptation, I think that so many of us just kind of resonate with, is that like maybe I can live in both, you know.

[ 14 : 34 ] I want to be on both sides of the fence here. Man, I want to say I want to love God, but I want to hold on to these other things. And God is clearly saying that no, you can't.

Jesus even said you can't do that. You can't love both of those things that are in opposition to each other. He says no man can serve two masters. You're going to end up loving one and hating the other.

James says, in James 4 verse 4, the second part, therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

And what is the world? Man, it's everything that is going to pass away. It is everything that isn't going to last. Just think about that.

Where is our boast? Is our boast in the temporal things? Is that the message of our life? The things that we are living for? The things that we put our hope in and our trust in? Let's give some examples.

[ 15 : 39 ] If my life is boasting in Jesus and boasting in being a Republican or a Democrat, I have to reckon with the fact that some of their positions don't align with the gospel.

And if I'm singing to those two different melodies of those things, what comes out of me is confusion.

Because two different melodies sung at the same time does not make sense. And when you speak two opposing messages, it's hard for others to understand. Here's another example.

If my boast is in my wealth, that's a different message to the gospel's boast in sacrificial generosity. If my boast is in pursuing pleasure and fun, that speaks a different message to the gospel's boast of sacrificially serving others.

If my boast is in my freedom to do what I want, how I want, with who I want, whenever I want, that speaks a different message to the gospel's boast of being joyfully submitted to God and others in community.

[ 16 : 52 ] Now, you can hear those things in two very different ways. You can hear, wow, think of all the things that I am losing here. And this is focusing on what the gospel takes away from you.

I'm losing my freedom. I'm losing my autonomy. I'm losing fun times. I'm losing wealth. And it sounds like Jesus is this killjoy that takes all the good stuff of life away from you.

All the things that we like to do. And you know what? A lot of Christians, they live with that outlook.

And you know what? They are grumpy people. It's a gospel that focuses on God's prohibitions.

Some Christians, like, really get into it. They're the picket sign guys on the corner yelling at people saying, like, this is what you shouldn't do. This is what you shouldn't do. This is what you shouldn't do. But don't give them any hope.

But for Paul, this idea of focusing on those things, it's focusing on the prohibitions, man, it misses the mark of what the gospel was all about.

[ 17 : 50 ] He didn't spend his time boasting on God's nose. He says this in verse 15, because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace.

I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. He's talking about this trip he had planned to come to them. Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say yes, yes, and no, no at the same time? What Paul is saying to them is like, guys, the Christian life, a lot of what we do is planned in pencil.

And there's stuff that we would like to do, good stuff. Paul wanted to come back to Corinth. He wanted to bless them, right? He says, man, if I come, I'm going to give you a second experience of grace.

That word grace is gift. It's a God gift. It's a God blessing. He was wanting to come back and bring something beautiful in a deposit that was going to encourage them and strengthen them and help them.

[ 18 : 55 ] But then his plans had to change. And I'm sure the Corinthian church was like, yes, Paul's coming. Like, he's going to fix all these problems. And then his plans changed on them. But you know what Paul doesn't do?

He doesn't wallow in God's no. He isn't like, man, God, how come you didn't make a way for me to get to that church in Corinth? Because he doesn't see it that way.

In verse 18, the very next thing he says, as surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been yes and no. 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.

For all the promises of God find their yes in him, in Jesus. That is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory.

What Paul is saying to the Corinthian church is a truth that just doesn't speak to that one situation. And here's the thing. Situations in our life, circumstances, they do require some gospel flexibility.

[ 20 : 06 ] There are things that come at us that we look in the word and we're like, oh man, there's not a scripture for this. This is a bummer. But it may require some gospel flexibility.

And we have to realize that in there, there's some wiggle room. But then we also have to realize that, you know what? There is also some rigidity in the gospel. There is certain things that will never, ever, ever change.

And so Paul is saying this and it speaks to how we live our whole life as disciples of Jesus. And he's saying this, man, don't worry about the changing circumstances and how you have to be flexible.

Let your life be one consistent boast in Jesus' yes. He's saying, why focus on the prohibitions when the promises of God are so much better?

It's like complaining about not being able to look at the drab gray world behind you because you're stuck looking at this beautiful sunset in front of you. Right?

[ 21 : 09 ] And that is what Paul is saying. He's pointing, Paul's point of focusing on the yes is that we have that yes in Jesus. We get to look at this beautiful sunset.

Did he want to come to Corinth sooner? Of course. But the yes in Jesus meant saying no or pushing pause on that trip so that the gospel would be advanced into Macedonia.

And also to look for, to help his other gospel friendships and friends that were in dire need at the time. So the delay was God's yes for gospel advancement in another region and gospel work in a different place.

And here's the thing that you and I have to look at this and say, God's yes is always good and always better. And here's another reality. As much as God's yes is a no to something lesser, his no is a yes to something better.

How can we be sure of that? God said no to an old covenant where you and I had to earn his blessing and his promises by performing to a righteous standard that we couldn't fulfill.

[ 22 : 23 ] And yet all the blessings and all the promises and all the pleasures of God were built on us having to keep that perfect record of righteousness. And guess what? If we failed, which we all do, we came under the old covenant's curses and punishments.

God said no to that old covenant because he said yes to a new and better covenant where Jesus came and he fulfilled all the old covenant demands that were on us.

He performed to the righteous standard of the law. He obeyed God perfectly. He alone was sinless. And through that, he met the righteous standard of the law.

He fulfilled it in our place and earned God's promises and pleasures and blessings for us so that we could live in them. And not only that, he died as a sacrifice to atone for our sins, to take upon himself the old covenant curses so we didn't have to take on those curses.

That is the yes we have in Christ. Look what Paul says. Are these new covenant promises that find their yes, their fulfillment, their guarantee in Jesus.

[ 23 : 48 ] In verse 21, And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ. When it says God establishes us, it means he's put us on solid, stable, secure ground.

It isn't shifting. We're not in quicksand. Because our yes is in Jesus, we can't slip or trip or slide away from him at all. And you know what?

He secures us together in Christ. We are together in this. He establishes us together, which is like, think of, think of being established in Christ together like a box of cement, wet cement, that we all step into in God's grace.

Boom. Boom. We are rooted and grounded and solidified together in that. And you know what? When we live by that grace, when we understand that, that we are established together in him and he is what brings us together by his covenant, we ain't going nowhere.

We are fixed with him, with each other. It's a beautiful thing. And because our yes is in Jesus, it also says God has anointed us too.

[ 25 : 00 ] You know who were anointed in Paul's day? Important people. Kings were anointed. Priests were anointed. And prophets were anointed.

And these people were anointed to show that they were called by God to a specific role in his service to fulfill his will. And that anointing showed that they had been qualified by God to that role. And all of these are offices Jesus has fulfilled perfectly. He is our greater prophet. He is our greater priest. He is our greater king.

And yet in him, we are also anointed, it says. And we are qualified to be little prophets and priests and kings at work in the service of God and his mission and what he's on about through the church. Prophets proclaim God's truth. Can you proclaim God's truth? Yes. We can say yes and amen to that. That's good. Priests, they had special access to God's presence.

[ 26 : 10 ] Do you have access to God's presence freely? Amen. And you know what else priests did is they ministered for people. They ministered in front of God to people.

They made intercession for others. They ministered. Can we do that? Can we be praying for others? Can we minister to God on behalf of others? Yes, we can. Kings, they were called to be discerning judges and they also fought battles.

Now, that doesn't mean we're going out and shedding blood. But do we engage in spiritual warfare? Absolutely. Can we be discerning in our lives and have wisdom to know what's between right and wrong and what's good and evil?

Absolutely. Absolutely. To be saved by Jesus is to be anointed, not with oil, but the Bible says we're anointed with the Holy Spirit, God himself, who is the new anointing for this new covenant.

And because we are an anointed people under the Holy Spirit, we have the calling to minister as prophets, priests, and kings. This is the yes we have in Jesus.

[ 27 : 17 ] Sounds amazing, right? But wait, there's more. Verse 22, it says this, What does it mean that we have Jesus' seal on us?

God's seal on us. This is a powerful truth. If, in those days, when a king would pass a law or an ordinance or a declaration, it would either be written on a stone tablet or it would be written on parchment.

And to make it official, to make it official and irrevocable, even a king, the king who made that, couldn't go back on his ordinance, on what he had written down if it's been sealed.

But what he would do is, he would put his unique seal on that stone tablet or on that parchment. And in Jesus' yes, God has sealed his declaration over you that is irrevocable. That's good news. You are justified.

[ 28 : 32 ] Therefore, there is now no condemnation. There is no worry and fear of punishment for those who are in Christ Jesus. You can come freely into his presence.

That's the declaration over you. You are adopted as a son, as a child of God. That is his declaration over you. You are set apart, qualified for his service, anointed.

That is his declaration over you. You are no longer an enemy of God, but you are a friend. You are a citizen of heaven. That is his declaration over you. You will not perish, but you will have eternal life.

That's his declaration over you. You have a place being prepared for you in advance by Jesus for you in heaven that you will come into an inheritance one day to rule and reign with him.

That is his declaration over you. And you have a seat at his table with your name on it, at his banqueting table, feasting in his presence with him forever.

[ 29 : 29 ] That is his declaration over you. And it is irrevocable. All of that has been sealed by our king's unique seal.

In him, Ephesians 1, 13. In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our

inheritance.

Holy Spirit, our seal and our guarantee. And what I love about this is that we can know we are sealed because God's seal is a person, the Holy Spirit, who is active and alive in us, who we have a relationship with.

That is an amazing thing. And that should give us actually more assurance. It describes him as our counselor and our comfort and our God. He is with us now. He is God with us into the end of the age and into eternity.

And the Bible promises that the one who seals us also fills us. His presence isn't some minor quiet thing in the life of a disciple of Jesus.

[ 30 : 42 ] It's a major. It's a major thing. We don't have a sprinkling of the Holy Spirit. We are immersed in him like a bucket in the ocean. God's promised for you.

God's promises for you and me. They are secured in Jesus and experienced through the Holy Spirit who seals us and fills us and leads us in this life.

And our circumstances, they're going to change. We've got to have gospel flexibility. But God's promises never change.

And that is gospel truth secured in Jesus. So let's live lives that boast in those promises and in his blessings, that enjoy his pleasures, that are ours through Jesus' yes.

As the band comes up, I want to say to you, if you're here with us today and you're not a Christian, man, I am so glad you are here with us. And you heard about what Jesus' yeses are.

[ 31 : 46 ] Those promises of God that are amazing and they are better, I want to say, than anything else that you can experience in this life. And my prayer for you right now is your eyes are open to see the beauty of the sunset in front of you and realize everything you've been living for up to this point has been a drab, gray world of your own working and chasing after lesser things.

Salvation in Jesus is a yes.

Maybe you already know the answer to that question.

And it makes you a little uncomfortable. But you know what? God's grace is good. His grace is here. And it's leading you and me to repentance.

Where we need to maybe let go of some stuff that we've been boasting in. That we can move towards boasting in that one thing. So that our life can be singing and proclaiming one message.

[ 33 : 39 ] And it says God's loving kindness, not his harshness, leads us to repentance. We know that when we come and repent to God, what we are doing is we are stepping into his truth.

And his forgiveness. And his remembrance of who we truly are in him. And he always forgives. And he always welcomes us. And he always restores us. And he always renews us.

He is always faithful to do that. And so what I want to do is I want to give us a moment right now. To just say, man, Holy Spirit, come. Come, speak to my heart. Examine my heart.

Show me where you're leading me. Show me where I need to make adjustments. Show me what you're wanting me to repent of and to turn to you. So that I walk more in the fullness, the beauty of this gospel.

Where all your yeses have been secured in you. So let's take a few moments to do that right now. Let's just close our eyes. Just for the sake of concentration. Our confession is that we cannot do this on our own.

[ 34 : 49 ] We boast in our weaknesses. We confess, Lord, that our tendency is to drift from having the song of our hearts, the song of our lives be one thing, which is all the yeses we have in you, Jesus Christ.

And we need your grace. To remind us when we've drifted. That gently brings us back. But we need your empowering grace from you, Holy Spirit, that leads us into a life where we're singing one song. We're proclaiming one message. Help us, Lord. Lord, we so need you. By your grace and your power in this community, we can do this.

In your name, amen. We're going to stand and we're going to take communion together. Because you know what? This is our boast. That's what communion is. When we take communion, we're being brought to remembrance.

We are being brought to the fact that we have a Savior who died the death we should have died. His body broken and his blood shed.

[ 36 : 04 ] Our boast isn't in our works. Our boast is in the performance of Jesus in our place and his death for us. And so when we take this together, we're remembering all the yeses we have in Christ

because of this, because of this.

And so let's take it with thanksgiving. Let's take it with celebration in our amazing Savior. Let's eat and drink together.