

PROMISES

I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia...When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"? But as surely as the Lord is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises have been made they are always "Yes" in Christ...

II Corinthians 1:16-20

What is Paul saying in this passage? What is all this "yes, yes" and "no, no" about? Paul is saying that just as the "yes" in Jesus Christ is a sure thing, so is the "yes" in him. He promised to visit the Corinthians and he fulfilled his promise. Our God is faithful. All of his promises are true. Therefore if we reflect God's nature, we are also people who keep our promises. This is a reality of the Kingdom; God's people do what they say.

It is easy to make a promise. Want to get somebody off your back, just concede. Want to make that friend that you haven't seen for a long time happy, tell them that you'll get together soon. Want to make your Pastor happy, tell him that you will help with that event or that you will be in church next week for sure. Want to overcome a habit, tell yourself that you will really work on it next time. That which we desire most earnestly, we believe most eagerly. But fulfilling a commitment is not as easy as speaking it. Making a promise to do what we desire satisfies our conscience temporarily. But keeping a promise involves effort and effort requires time and time takes sacrifice.

When the promise-making mood passes and reality sets in or obstacles make it difficult a promise is challenged. No one can accuse you of having bad intentions. You intend to do what you say. You want to help others. You want to get involved and you want to make a difference. You want to say what you mean and mean what you say, but somehow it doesn't always work out that way. Why is that? It's easier to make a promise than to keep it. What is the percentage of what you say to what you do? Here's how to improve your average.

To keep a promise you first have to have a plan. Paul said, "I made plans to visit you." Write it down so you don't forget it. I find so many of us get caught up in the next demand and forget what we said. Write it down and then set a date. Get it in your schedule. If you don't put it in your weekly/monthly plan, something else will take its place. Secondly, hold yourself accountable. When you make a promise, don't let yourself off the hook. Paul said, "Do I make plans in a worldly manner?" Don't let excuses rob your word, that's worldly. Thirdly, to keep a promise you must be willing to sacrifice. You might have to let something that you wanted to do for yourself go in order to keep your word. You will also have to make sure roadblocks don't deter your willingness. Paul says, "As surely as the Lord is faithful..." Jesus **is** faithful and faithfulness calls for sacrifice. Remember, the most trusted person is the one who makes their "Yes, yes."