



**SERMONS**

by

*Anthony Baateng*

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**Preacher: Anthony Boateng**

**Bible readings: 2 Corinthians 1: 18-22 Isaiah 43: 18-25**

**Title: "Amen! For the glory of God"**

In our first reading from 2 Corinthians 1:18-22, Paul is addressing some unpleasant reports from Corinth regarding a failed promise to visit them.

### **The Narrative**

In response, this morning, we're presented with Paul's letter to explain the change in his ministry—the reason for his absence. Paul had previously visited Corinth and preached the gospel with his companions, Silas and Timothy. During this visit, their ministry was very successful, and the people were filled with joy and affection. Consequently, the people of Corinth invited them back. Paul agreed, saying, "Yes, I will come again to visit you briefly on my way to Macedonia, and then again on my way back to Judea."

Unfortunately, things did not go according to plan. God had other plans for them. And so, his "Yes" turned into a "No." As a result, some in Corinth became upset and began tarnishing his name, accusing him of lying and being untrustworthy. Paul's image was damaged, and his witness of the gospel was weakened.

### **How does this relate to us?**

I think we can all relate to this story in some way. Perhaps you know what it's like to long to spend time with a loved one, only for things to be beyond your control. Maybe you've been falsely accused or misunderstood, called a liar, or deemed unreliable. Maybe you've held a grudge or made a mistake. So, what do you do when the narrative is against you? When your reputation is on the line? When someone betrays you? Do you act on your own flesh or trust in the Lord? Do you respond with love or hold a grudge?

Let me tell you something, brothers and sisters. Sometimes, this is just a test to see if we will truly submit to the will of the Holy Spirit, to choose reconciliation over holding grudges, and to recognize that retaliation only leads to further blindness.

I want to share something with you, brothers and sisters. Over the past year or so, I have been experiencing some spiritual irritation. At first, I couldn't quite understand why I was feeling this way. I felt lonely and isolated. In search of answers, I recently came across a tweet from Revd Mmasape Zihle, the wife of one of our London District Chair, Revd. Dr. J. Zihle. She tweeted: "Loneliness is not about being alone but rather the absence of emotional and spiritual connectedness to others." It gave me a different perspective.

There have been times when I felt bewildered by the state of our churches, discouraged by the lack of young people, and disheartened by the lack of unity among our youth. For someone at the early stage of my ministry, I felt hopeless and questioned how I could ever fulfil my calling and bring about the much-needed change. In search of answers, I started visiting other Methodist churches, HTB, and Hillsong even.

With a heavy heart, after praying and reflecting, I recently decided to formally transfer my membership to Central Hall Westminster Church. Some part of me still questions how I can ask us to unite in love and fight for radical revival when I'm leaving the ship.

### **So what did Paul say?**

In Paul's defence, he writes: *"For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.' For this reason, it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God. But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment."*

In other words, Paul is saying, "My loyalty has not changed just to seek after my own agenda, glory, or interest. I do not answer 'yes' and 'no' in the same breath. I do not just say things to get what I want. My actions are not based on human agenda but inspired by the Holy Spirit. My ministry may appear to have changed, but it's only because of my commitment to yield to the Spirit, which acts as a guarantee."

In our second reading, Isaiah writes: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

### **So what can we take from today's readings?**

1. Brothers and sisters, this morning through the prophet Isaiah, I believe God is urging us to forget about all the past hurt, struggles, and disappointment caused by others and look forward to the promise of a new life. He's already making a way in the desert for us. Amen! For the glory of God!

I'm suggesting that through unity, hard work, and perseverance, God will set us free. Amen! For the glory of God! And for the oppressors—the ones who occupy leadership positions but use them for their own evil agendas or pretend to like us but really want our downfall—they will be exposed. Amen! For the glory of God!

2. Brothers and sisters, I'm urging us to be careful not to judge others and to encourage especially our young ones. Let us remember that we have all sinned and fallen short in the eyes of the Lord. We have all made mistakes along our Christian journey, but as we take on Jesus Christ and rise to walk in the newness of life in Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit as an assurance of His salvation. Amen! For the glory of God!

3. Brothers and sisters, I'm urging us to be careful with our words, especially when we're angry or disappointed. Sometimes it's best to walk away, but that doesn't mean we're in the wrong. We need to be gentle and use diplomacy. This morning, I believe that God is urging us to put our faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, "for in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.' For this reason, it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God." He's the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow; He does not change.

Merciful God, give us the Spirit of wisdom, patience, strength, and gentleness to treat one another with love even when they disappoint us. Help us to live in your image to draw others closer to you. **Amen.**