

Well, hey everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek Church, come on. Let's welcome in all of our campuses. It's good to see you guys. My name is Dawson and I get to serve as a Student Director at our Denton campus. And I just want to say, it's so good to be with all you guys today. We're in summer. It's June. The days are getting longer, thank goodness. It's getting warmer outside, and we're in our brand new series called 60 Days of Unfamiliar Promises. Okay. Why unfamiliar? Why not familiar promises? Why unfamiliar promises? Why, ironically today we're going to be talking about familiar promises. You see, they're promises that we see all the time. They're on the Stanley cups, you know, the stickers. They're on like, the eye black of athletes, you know, Tim Tebow, he's got the eye black with the Scripture on it. They're on a fast food chain cups. Seriously, they're on fast food chain cups. I mean they're everywhere. We got people on Instagram and TikTok dancing and pointing at Scripture as it's coming up on the screen. You know what I'm talking about. I see those all the time. And so, we're super familiar with these promises. So, why unfamiliar? Why unfamiliar promises? Well, last week, we asked you a question – do you know that God's Scripture is full of His promises, promises that were made to you by God? Do you know them? Here's a better question. Do you believe them? And to believe, I mean, to act as if it were so, to act as if it's the realest things in your life. So, do you believe His promises? You see, these are why these are unfamiliar familiar promises, because we don't actually believe them. You see, if we believed them, our lives wouldn't be so chaotic. We wouldn't have despair. We wouldn't give in so easily. No, we would trust in His promises and we would find joy in all the circumstances. And so, one of our hopes this series is that as these promises are presented to you, you would just grab a hold of them. And that, in grabbing a hold of them, you would find life in Jesus' name, because all of His promises are "yes." And not just like one or two promises, no. Every single promise that's presented to you over the course of this summer, grab a hold of it. It's yours. Claim it.

You see, in 2 Corinthians, it says, "For 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." Okay. No matter how many promises God has made, they are yes, for sure, for certain, never in question, never a doubt. They are yes in Jesus. And so, through Him, the amen is spoken by us. Okay. What does that mean? Well, amen is essentially saying, I believe, I agree. This is true in my life and I agree by faith that all of His promises are yes in Jesus. And so, I'm going to move forward in that. And so, how do we move forward in that? How do we act like all of His promises are yes? Well, first, we got to claim it, declare it and walk in it. You got to claim it. Okay. You know, your unclaimed luggage at the airport, it's yours. You just have to go get it. You got to say boldly and confidently, this is mine, and it belongs to me. So, it's coming home with me. And I don't know about you guys, but if my clothes are at the airport and my luggage, I'm going to go get it. I'm going to go get my luggage back. And then we got to declare it. You see, there's something so powerful about declaring God's Scripture out loud. We got to say out loud so our lips say it, our ears hear it. So our hearts can believe it. And not just for ourselves, but for the people around us. And then we have to claim it, or I'm sorry, not claim. I already said that. Then we got to walk in it. You already claimed it. You got to walk in it. Walking in it is where you find out if you actually believe it. You see, it's not just good enough to claim it, and declare it,

and just keep living your life the same way. No, His promises are a yes. And so, that should change the way you live your life. And so, that's our invitation this summer. Our invitation is to claim, declare, and walk in these promises to act as if they're true.

And so, our promise, this week, the second promise we're looking into this summer is Romans 8:28. "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Okay, come on. Let's declare this together. You ready? Awesome. "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." That's good. Okay. So, I want to say it again because that gave me chills. I like that. And so, we're going to say it again. But this time, we're really going to go for it. Are you ready? All right. "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." We know this one, right? We see it everywhere, man. It's on the Instagram bios. It's on Hobby Lobby aisles when you're walking through. It's on the sign. It's something we say to each other all the time. You know, when someone's having a bad day, you just go up to them, you clap them on the back, you're like, "Hey, man, God's going to work it for the good." You give them a thumbs up and you send them on the way. You know what I'm talking about? We know this promise. So, do you believe it? Do you believe that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him? So, what does this mean? I mean, truly, like, what does it mean? I mean, here's the thing. This means that no matter what the circumstances, no matter what has happened, what is happening or what will happen, God's working on your behalf, for your good, for your benefit. And you might be sitting there like, "Bro, it does not feel like that. My life hasn't been good. It's not good right now. And I don't think it's going to get better anytime soon. So, how can this be true in my life?" Well, I hear you. I really do. And then the reason I think this doesn't go any deeper than us in the Hobby Lobby aisle, in fact, like, it's in the back of the building, like it's on clearance, like they're selling it for \$0.99 a sign, and they're just like, take it, please, like, just take it. The reason why it doesn't go deeper than us or into us in the clearance aisle is because it doesn't say what we actually want it to say. We wanted it to say that all things will be good. All things, all the time, will be good. But that's not what God is saying. God is very aware of this world that we live in. He's saying, "Hey, despite everything else that's going on in your life, I'm good. And because I'm good, I'm going to work for the good of those who follow Me. I'm working on their behalf."

You see, this is -- and Jesus was very aware of this, too. This is what He says right before He goes to the cross. "In this world, you will have trouble." We want this to say, "In this world, you won't have any trouble." But that's not what He's saying. You're going to have trouble, "But take heart. I have overcome the world." Okay, make no mistake about it. In this world, because of the world you live in, you're going to have trouble. There are bad situations, bad circumstances, bad places, bad people. That's just the world we live in. But you see, Jesus is above all. And because He's above all, He actually has authority over all. And He has authority over all, He can declare, "Hey, despite the world you live in, take heart. I've overcome the world. So, you don't need to be afraid. You don't need to be in despair. You don't need to give

up, because I have overcome the world." Come on, guys. That is so good. That's a promise for you. That's a promise for me. And so, who knew this better than the guy who wrote it? Well, not that, but the guy who wrote Romans 8. His name's Paul. Love Paul. Romans 8:28 was written in a letter to the church in Rome. And this is like, first-century church. Like this is the -- church is just now getting off the ground. And so, let me just kind of set the scene for you. So, the church in Rome was subject to a lot of abuse, persecution, on the run, and fear for their lives. And in the middle of all of that, they were actually divided, like split down the middle. You had people on one side saying one thing, and you had people on the other side saying another thing. And so, you can just imagine being a Christian in Rome at the time and thinking, like, this is not good. This is not fun. This is not what I signed up for. I thought following Jesus was supposed to be amazing. I thought this was supposed to be to change my life. Well, it did change my life and I'm not having a good time. I'm in fear for my life. I'm on the run and the people I'm supposed to be getting along with, I don't get along with them. So, how is this good? Well, then you get a letter from this guy named Paul and he's saying, "Hey, despite what's happening to us right now, because I know it's hard, God works for the good of those who love Him." And he can say this from personal experience.

Well, what's his personal experience? Well, his personal experience is crazy, guys. And so, he actually writes off kind of his story in 2 Corinthians of like, "This is everything that's happened to me." And so, I'm going to read it off to us. Are you ready? Okay. He says, "I've been in prison a lot, flogged severely and exposed to death again and again. Five times, I received 40 lashes. Three times, I was beaten with rods. Once, I was pelted with stones. Three times, I was shipwrecked. I've constantly been on the move. I've been in danger from rivers, from bandits, my fellow Jews and Gentiles. Endangered in the city and the countryside and the sea and from false believers. I've labored and toiled. I barely get sleep. I've known hunger and thirst. I've been cold and naked." And this is really funny to me. This is what he chooses to wrap up the list with, "And besides everything else, I faced a daily pressure of my concern for all the churches." He said, "And somehow after all that, I still have to deal with you people. That's why you keep getting letters from me." Like they had him really stressed out. I mean, this is quite the list, right? Like everything is in here. Personal experiences, storms, hardships, pain, worry, defeat, it's all right here. And despite all of it, Paul writes, "And we know that God works for the good of those who love Him." Look at what he says in 2 Corinthians. Well, I did that earlier. Come on, guys. There we go, Dawson. Okay. "We're hard pressed on every side, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed." Okay, church. Hey, you might be hard pressed on every side, but because God is working on your behalf, you're not crushed. Perplexed, but you're not in despair. Persecuted, but you're not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed. Here's the thing. Paul died for his faith. Literally, was killed because he followed Jesus. That's not the good ending we all want, right? That's not a good circumstance. Well, guess what? If Paul was here right now, I guarantee you he would stand by everything he wrote. Why? Because he believed in this promise. You see, because Paul ran his race, because he never gave up. He never gave in. You and I now have the New Testament. We have entire books filled with his words that he wrote to

the churches for us to enjoy, to learn from, to grow and to become more like Jesus. Tell me God doesn't work for the good of those who love him.

And so, Paul knew it. Paul understood it. And I want to do that too, man. I want my life to look like that. Despite whatever is happening to me in my life, I just want to believe it like Paul believed it. But man, when the slightest inconvenience comes my way, I act like the world's ending. Truthfully, like when the Chick-fil-A line is too long, when I get cut off in traffic, when my modern appliance that I bought with my money doesn't work, I act like the world's ending. Like seriously, we have a real struggle believing this promise in the big things, because we can't even believe it in the small things. And man, I really wrestle with this because I want my life to look like Paul. I really do. I want my life to look just like his. I want to believe it like he did it. But here's the thing, guys. This has been the story of humanity since the fall of man. Like this goes all the way back to the beginning. Like since the fall of man, there are things designed to steal, to kill, and destroy the life that you have in Jesus. Like, things are strategically placed in our lives to trip us, to poke us, to annoy us, to frustrate us, to exhaust us to the point where we take our eyes off the goodness of God, and we put it on to our circumstances. And we're not the only ones. Like, this doesn't just start with Paul. It didn't just start with Jesus. No, this goes all the way back to the beginning. So, this guy named Joseph, you're like, "Dude, there's another guy who had a hard life?" Yeah, this is all of our stories, okay. And so, Joseph, he's a man. He's awesome. He's got everything going for him. He's just trying to do everything right. He's favored by God. He's loved by his parents. He has gifts, dreams, talents. He's got everything going for him. And one day, everything changes. You see, I'm not going to get into all the details, but his brothers actually betray him and sell him into slavery. And he heads to Egypt and he is sold to a man there and he works in his house as a slave. And it's okay, things are alright. Like, he's favored. So, he's working really hard. But then, he's accused for something he never did and he's thrown into prison alone, abandoned and forgotten for 10 years, left there to rot. And so, you're reading the story and you're like, "Dude, can't this guy catch a break?" Like, this is a good guy. Like what's the deal? You ever just feel like that? Like, God, I'm a good guy. I'm a good dude. Why is this happening to me? It feels like every time I take a step forward, I take two steps back. Nothing is going my way. You ever feel like that sometimes? Well, fast forward 10 years and Joseph is called upon by Pharaoh. You see, I told you he has gifts, talents, dreams. Well, he's actually a dream interpreter. That's what he can do. That's a gift God gave him. And so, Pharaoh hears about this gift he has and he goes, "Hey, bring Joseph to me. I got this dream. I need to know what it means." And so, Joseph listens to him and as he's telling him what's happening, Joseph is like, "Okay, here's what's going to happen. A famine is going to come and it's going to kill everybody. But here's what you need to do. Here's the plan. Here's how we're going to save everyone." And Pharaoh is so impressed and so grateful, he actually takes Joseph out of prison and places him in the palace, from the pit to the palace like that. And not only is just like, he's a really cool guy now. No, he's actually second only to Pharaoh. So, he's ruling the land. He's in charge of everything. And we read that and we're like, dude, that's what I'm talking about. That's a promise. Like it was just

like "poof" one day. Like, why can't it just be "poof" for me? Well, it wasn't just "poof" for Joseph, man. Actually, the truth is God had His hand in this the entire way.

You see, if you actually read the story, it's almost like God had this needle and a thread, and He was just putting together this beautiful story on this tapestry. And all you can see is a tiny bit. But man, if you take a step back, it's beautiful. It's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen. You see, I love this story so much, because it's a full circle moment for Joseph. You see, because of the famine, distant lands didn't have any food. And so, they had to come to Egypt to get food. And guess who shows up hungry looking for food? His brothers. Joseph sees them. He welcomes them in. He loves them. He forgives them. He invites them to come live with him. And through their family in Egypt, we get the Hebrew nation. And through that Hebrew nation, we get Moses. And Moses takes the Hebrew nation, leads them out of Egypt into Israel. And it's in Israel where we get King David. And through the line of King David, we get Jesus. And because of Jesus, you and I are here right now. That's a beautiful story. That's a beautiful story. And you see, at the end of his life, this is what Joseph says right here. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good. To accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Where others intend to do evil things, God uses those things for good, man. He's working on your behalf. Here's the thing. This is Joseph's Romans 8:28. This is his promise. This is what he's got in his Instagram bio. Paul had Romans 8:28 in his Instagram bio. This is the verse Paul is getting Romans 8:28 from. Like this is what -- like he knew the Scriptures. And so, he knew this promise. And so, he is holding onto this. So, we're talking Old Testament and New Testament, different words, same promise, same God doing the same things he did with Joseph and with Paul and with Jesus that he's doing right now with you and with me.

I love this story, man. It encourages me. It gives me hope in my circumstances. And so, man, if you look forward in our lives, we can only see this small little circumstance, right? If we look at our lives today, right now, all I can see is my circumstances. But if we take a step back, we actually get God's perspective. Like, God has a 30,000-foot view perspective. We have like this 5-foot perspective, you know. And all we can see is the situation. But if we take a step back, we can actually see everything God is doing. The reason why we forget Romans 8:28 is because we don't know verse 29. Verse 29 is God's perspective. Let's look at it. So, verse 28, "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Verse 29, "For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son." We're looking for the good outcomes. God is looking for the good character. We're looking for the good situations. God is worried about shaping and molding us into the image of Jesus. You see, He is taking all these situations and all these scenarios and He's using it for our good. The good work He is doing is shaping and molding us into the image of Jesus. And so, next time you see Romans 8:28 in Hobby Lobby or on an Instagram bio, I want you to remember verse 29, the good work God is doing in me is turning me into the image of Jesus. That's the promise. That's a whole heartbeat of everything we're talking about today.

You see, there was a time in my life where I really struggled with this promise. I really struggled having this 30,000-foot view perspective of what God was doing. You see, when I was 12 years old, my dad passed away unexpectedly. It was sudden. It came out of nowhere. It was shocking. I just remember saying goodnight to my dad one night and then waking up the next morning and my mom's in my room and she's explaining kind of what happened over the night, how he was fine and then he wasn't, and he had passed away in the hospital. And I just remember in that moment feeling overwhelmed and asking a lot of questions. Why us? Why now? We're a good family. We go to church. Why is this happening to me? Why my dad? I don't get it. I don't understand it. And here's the thing. I knew Romans 8:28. I'd heard it on Sunday. I had heard it on Wednesday nights. People told it to me all the time. It was like, seriously, throughout middle school and high school, man, people would hear my story and be like, "God is going to work it for the good." And I just wanted to sit there and look at them and be like, "Man, you don't know what this is like. This isn't good. You see my circumstance?" I was just good. And I wanted to look at them and say, "You don't know what it's like. You don't know my pain. You don't know what it's like to lose your dad at 12." And here's the thing. You might not know what that's like, but I don't know your pain either. I don't know your story. I don't know what you've gone through. And I'm not going to give you a bunch of examples today, because that's not what you need. You know your pain. You know what you've been through. And so, I really, really struggled with this promise for a long time. And it wasn't until I actually claimed it, until -- that's when I found peace in my life. Like, it was like peace was not there until I claimed this promise to be true in my life. You see, the thing about this promise is that just because you claim it, it doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. Like it doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. It doesn't mean you don't miss the person you lost. Like, I still miss my dad. It doesn't mean my circumstances have changed. Like my circumstances are still the same, y'all. My dad is not here with me. And it doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. It doesn't mean I don't miss him. He wasn't there for my wedding. He wasn't there for -- to meet my wife. He didn't get to see all the football games and the track meets, all the accomplishments in my life, all the things we've enjoyed. He didn't get to see my little sister and little brother grow up to the amazing people they are today. And so, that hurts. And here's the thing. God is not saying it doesn't hurt. God is not saying, man, it shouldn't hurt. You shouldn't miss your life. No, that's not what he's saying, man. Here's the thing. I believe this promise so much that I actually believe God had His hands in it all the way through. He took a bad situation, a bad circumstance that just happened in a world filled with trouble, and He used it for my good, the shaping and molding of my character and to who I am today. That's the good work God was doing all throughout my life.

And I don't get it. Like, I don't understand it. I don't have an answer to why my dad is not here anymore. But I don't need that. Here's why. "For now, we see only reflection as in a mirror. Then we shall see face to face. Now, I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." So, I'm known by God. He knows my situation. He knows my circumstances. But one day, I'm going to know the whole story, even though I only know a little bit right now. You

might only know a little bit of your situation right now. You can probably only see just a little bit. But one day, God is going to show you the entire story. Here's where I was in the beginning. Here's where I was in the end. And here's what I did all the way through that. That's the promise. That's what you're holding onto. This is what I'm holding onto. And so, this promise, it's not good enough just to know it, to just know it as like a Hobby Lobby aisle poster. Like this promise is super important, because here's the thing. There's three types of people in this room right now. You're either in a storm, you just got into one, or you just got out of one. That's the truth. So, you're either in a storm right now. You just got out of one or you're about to go into one. And so, what a promise to not just be familiar with, but to be very familiar with, to actually believe it. And so, how do we do that? How do we actually believe this promise? We got to claim it, declare it and walk in. You got to claim it. It's your unclaimed luggage. You got to go get it. You got to say, this is mine and it belongs to me. God is working on my behalf, for my good. That's the promise. It's for me. And then we got to declare it. We got to say it out loud. You got to say it out loud when you feel like it. You got to say it out loud when you don't feel like it. You got to say it out loud when everything is going great. You got to say it out loud when everything is not great. You got to say it when you believe it, and when you don't believe it. You got to say it for yourself. And you got to say it for the people around you, because other people around you are going through some of the same things you're going through. But if you're the one that declares this promise, maybe they'll claim it too. And then you got to walk in it. How do you walk in it? Like Joseph. Throughout the story of Joseph, man, he never gave up. He never gave in. He didn't say, "Woe is me. I'm a victim. God, what are you doing? I quit. I'm out. I don't want to do this anymore." No, he leaned in. He was open-handed. He allowed God to put things into his life, and he allowed God to take things out of his life. He was fully trusting God and fully trusting the promise that God was working on his behalf. And you might be thinking, like, bro, no one lives like that. No one does that. No one actually lives this life. Yeah, people do. People do live this life. They're in our church right now. They claim, declare, and walk in this promise every single day. Go find them. Ask them how they do it. You know who else did it? Jesus. Jesus claimed this promise as His. He declared it out loud for Himself and for the people around Him, and He walked in it. He modeled it for us. That's why Jesus can stand in front of the Pharisees when they're accusing Him of blaspheming and He is not afraid. That's why Jesus can walk up to people with leprosy and lay His hands on them. And I'm not telling you, go lay your hands on people with leprosy, that's not what I'm saying. But He can do that because he's not afraid. And that's why Jesus is in the boat, and there's a storm, and the disciples are the ones freaking out, and He's sleeping below deck. Like, he's sleeping during the storm.

And here's the thing. Whether you claim this promise or not, it's going to still come to pass. That's just how good God is. That's how good He is. What you miss out on along the way is the experience of claiming, declaring, and walking in the promise. You miss in the experience of believing the promise. It costs you something. When they were in the boat, it cost the disciples sleep, rest, and peace. Jesus had all three of those things. And so, as we wrap up today, I want to ask you a very, very honest question. What does it cost you? What does it cost you to not

claim this promise? It's costing you life. It's costing you life. Like let that sit for a second, your life. You see, we spend all of our time worrying, stressed out, frustrated, like straight up, I don't even remember what I was worried about last year. I know. And I don't even remember what I was worried about last week. It stole my life from me. I don't remember the bad things. I don't remember the good things, because I got my own worries today. And so, man, if that's you right now, like, I know. I know it's hard to claim it when everything is going wrong. I know it's hard to declare it when everyone else is telling you it's not worth it. There is no hope. And I know it's hard to walk in it when everything you do just doesn't work. And if that's you today, this doesn't mean the storm ends. It doesn't mean this is a race and you can just keep living this great, fantastic life. That's not what this promise means. But there's hope. This is your anchor to hold on to, to find joy in the chaos, peace, and the unrestlessness of your life, to find hope in the hopelessness. This is what we're holding on to. And so, man, what would it look like if you believed this promise? If you believed that God was working for your good on your behalf, that He was behind the scenes writing the story, what if we believed that? What if we claimed it, declared it, and walked in it? It would change our lives. It would change your life.

And so, whatever campus you're at right now, wherever you're at, I just want to declare over you, whether you feel it or not, God is working on your behalf. He's working for your good. You may only see a little bit right now, but man, one day you're going to fully know the goodness of God in your life. Trust in Him. Follow Him. Be open-handed. Let Him put things into your life. Let Him take things out of your life, because He knows what He's doing. He is God and He is good to you. And so, Jesus, we just thank You for this promise. Thank You that despite our circumstances and what's happening in our lives, despite all of the bad things, You're working on our behalf, for our good and for Your glory. And so, Jesus, would You just remind us of just Your goodness? Remind us that despite the circumstances, You're there. You're right there with us. You're in the storm with us and You're not afraid. And so, we don't have to be afraid either. And so, Jesus, this summer, may we claim, declare, and walk in that God works for the good of those who love Him. In Jesus' name, amen.