

# When God Says "No"

Sunday, October 28, 2018  
10:30 AM

## Key Texts:

### **Acts 16:6-10 New International Version (NIV)**

**6** Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. **7** When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. **8** So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." **10** After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

### **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 New International Version (NIV)**

**7** or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. **10** That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul faced situations in his life that seem to reflect instances when God said "No" When God does say "No" we tend to automatically assume...

- I am not worthy
- I've done something wrong
- God doesn't care
- I am being punished

While things like sin and disobedience can be a cause of unanswered prayer...

### **Psalms 66:18 New International Version (NIV)**

**18** If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

The reason we tend to default to these negative conclusions is that we have a child like understanding of our Father in heaven that believes He is obligated to say yes to everything we ask. After all, if he really loved us he would want us to be happy. He would give us what we want

We even misuse scriptures like...

**Psalm 37:4 New International Version (NIV)**

**4** Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

**2 Corinthians 1:20 New International Version (NIV)**

**20** 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.

To support our skewed theology

The fact is, there are many good reasons why God says NO

In Deuteronomy 3 God told Moses, "NO" when he told him he could not enter the promised land

God told David, "NO" when he told him that he would not be the man to build the House of The Lord. David also received a "NO" answer in regards to his payers for his son with Bathsheba

Martha's received a "NO" when she requested that Jesus tell her sister to get up and help her.

Likewise, a man who was healed of demons was told "NO" when he begged to go with Jesus. Instead h was told

**Mark 5:19-20 New International Version (NIV)**

**19** Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” **20** So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis[\[a\]](#) how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

We've already seen that Paul dealt with "NO's" as well

Even Jesus received a "NO" from his Father when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed; "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me."

So what do we need to know when we face what seems like a "NO" from God. Here are a few things to consider. This may not be an exhaustive list and it may be that several of these factors are true at the same time. But hopefully it will give us better insight into what God may be doing in our lives

### **1. God has a different means of getting us to the same end**

Sometimes the "NO" isn't about the end but about how you will get there. In Paul's case God wasn't saying that he didn't want Paul to preach the gospel or plant churches, but his plan had a different means to that end

### **2. Saying yes is out of line with His Nature, Character or Will**

Obviously God is not going to give us a "YES" if it goes against His nature, character or will. What we need to work on here is not understanding the most obvious conflicts ("Lord, please hide my adulterous affair from my wife") but the more subtle ways in which our desires do not conform to God's nature, character or will.

That is why we are taught to pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

### **3. God knows that saying yes will hurt us**

I often tell my kids "NO" because I know that saying "YES" might bring harm to them

Illustration: Car Seat

*B.M. Palmer in Theology of Prayer, tells of a woman who had spent the summer away from her children, and was quite anxious to get back to them. When she learned that all the rooms on a certain steamer were taken, she wept bitterly. Because she couldn't get a passage on any other ship, she was detained two weeks in NYC. But the sorrow of being delayed was turned into thanksgiving when, within a few days, she learned that the vessel that denied her passage was buried at the bottom of the Atlantic. She didn't see the "no" as a wonderful answer to prayer until the whole story unfolded.*

#### 4. God has a much better Yes

For instance, we pay for a specific relationship to work out only to be told "NO" What we may not see is that God has someone so much better for us than the person we thought would be the answer to our prayer.

##### **Isaiah 55:8 New International Version (NIV)**

**8** "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

God told Abraham "NO" when he asked that Ishmael might live before God as his heir. God had a better yes. A son of promise give to Abraham and Sarah 13 years latter

*A carpenter was building some crates for the clothes his church was sending to an orphanage in China. On his way home, he reached into his shirt pocket to find his glasses, but they were gone. He remembered putting them there that morning, so he drove back to the church. His search proved fruitless. When he mentally replayed his earlier actions, he realized what happened. The glasses had slipped out of his pocket unnoticed and fallen into one of the crates, which he had nailed shut. His brand new glasses were heading for China!*

*The Great Depression was at its height, and the man had six children. He had spent twenty dollars for those glasses that very morning. "It's not fair," he told God as he drove home in frustration. "I've been very faithful in giving of my time and money to your work, and now this."*

*Several months later, the director of the orphanage was on furlough in the United States. He wanted to visit all the churches that supported him in China, so he came to speak one Sunday night at this small church in Chicago. The carpenter and his family sat in their customary seats among the sparse congregation.*

*The missionary began by thanking the people for their faithfulness in supporting the orphanage.*

*"But most of all," he said, "I must thank you for the glasses you sent last year. You see, the Communists had just swept through the orphanage, destroying everything, including my glasses. I was desperate.*

*"Even if I had the money, there was simply no way of replacing those glasses. Along with not being able to see well, I experienced headaches every day, so my*

*coworkers and I were much in prayer about this. Then your crates arrived. When my staff removed the covers, they found a pair of glasses lying on top."*

*The missionary paused long enough to let his words sink in. Then, still gripped with the wonder of it all, he continued: "Folks, when I tried on the glasses, it was as though they had been custom-made just for me! I want to thank you for being a part of that."*

*The people listened, happy for the miraculous glasses. But the missionary surely must have confused their church with another, they thought. There were no glasses on their list of items to be sent overseas.*

*But sitting quietly in the back, with tears streaming down his face, an ordinary carpenter realized the Master Carpenter had used him in an extraordinary way.*

## 5. God wants to move us towards a greater position of trust, faith and maturity

*"I was more concerned with not getting what I wanted than seeing where the Lord wanted me."*

C.S. Lewis once wrote, *"We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be."*

### **Job 13:15 Jubilee Bible 2000 (JUB)**

**15** Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him; but I will defend my ways before him.

### **Romans 8:28-29 New International Version (NIV)**

**28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose. **29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

6. A "NO" today doesn't mean a "NO" forever

**Genesis 18:14 New International Version (NIV)**

**14** Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

**Psalm 27:14 New International Version (NIV)**

**14** Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

**Habakkuk 3:17-19 New International Version (NIV)**

**17** Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, **18** yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

**19** The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.