

# When God Says No

Romans 8:28-30

## Intro

-Why does God sometimes say “no” to our most fervent prayer request?  
-Sometimes we don’t get our prayers answered the way we want God to answer them.  
-Why doesn’t God answer they way we want Him to respond? Doesn’t he care? Are we unworthy of what we ask?

-God sometimes says “no” not because He doesn’t care but precisely because He does care and has a better purpose or plan for us.

-Through His personal involvement in our lives, negative experiences become positive opportunities for Christian growth and development.

-God sometimes says no because he has something better for us. It happened to me when I was a young bachelor and wondering if some of the girls I was going out with would someday be my wife.

-I dated 2 girls and in the end it was 2 heartbreaks. God said no and it was sometimes disheartening. But I believed God had someone for me. I prayed often for the woman God would bring into my life

-BUT later I met the woman that would be my wife....Rosalind...

-We eventually got married and I’ve been blessed to be married more than 40 years. I’m glad God said no to the others...

-Many individuals throughout the Scriptures received a firm “no” in answer to their prayers, yet they all learned to accept God’s no reply and be grateful for it.

\*By reflecting on God’s plan for their lives they realized that they had fulfilled a divine purpose, therefore their disappointments and hardships were completely justified.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” That is one of the key principles in the Lord’s Prayer. Not our will but His will be done.

## Scripture Teaches

In Isaiah 55:8-11 God says, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*”

## Moses Exodus 3:6-13 (Who longed to see his dreams completed)

-Moses wanted to cross the River Jordan and enter Canaan with his people. He became obsessed with crossing into the Promised Land. He longed for a taste of victory, he ached to accomplish his assignment and just RELAX in Canaan.

-After 38 years of leading through the desert he wanted to experience the fruit of his long tiring ordeal and just rest in the Promised Land.

Deut. 3:25-26 “*Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan - that fine hill country*

and Lebanon. But because of you the Lord was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the Lord said.

### **Jonah** (Who wished to get away from it all)

- God told him to go and preach a message of repentance to Nineveh.
- Nineveh was the capital of the cruelest war machine in the world.
- No body would listen to a preacher.
- To go Nineveh would be a farce, a waste of time.
- Ninevehites were not like Jonah, they were not his type.
- Ninevehites showed no sense of responsibility.
- Some of Jonah's buddies said he was working too hard and worrying too much - take a vacation, "Take a nice long cruise".
- Jonah talked to his travel agent, heard about a slow cruise to Tarshish.
- But on the boat God said no and Jonah had to return to Nineveh and preach.

### **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**

In Daniel chapter 3 we read about three young Jewish lads who refused to bow down and worship the idol that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. The consequence was death in the fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:16-18 *"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."*

God said no to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – and yet they stick to their faith and resolve. "God can save us. But even if He doesn't, even if He says no – we will not bow down and we will not dishonour God. We will continue to be faithful to Him – no matter what the cost."

### **Paul**

He prayed 3 times that the Lord would take away the thorn in the flesh.

But the Lord said no and told Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Cor. 12:9).

### **Fred and Ina Orr**

Fred and Ina Orr missionaries from Ireland set out to Brazil in 1954...

### **Jesus** (Luke 22:39-44)

Our prime example of when God says no comes from Jesus when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. We all know that God said no to His Son's prayer. Jesus prayed that He wouldn't have to go through so much suffering and experience death. God the Father said no. Jesus prayed, *"Not my will but your will be done."* There are two important things for us to learn from Jesus' experience.

First of all, we need to look at how this prayer was prayed. How often, when we are praying, do we actually say words like, "not my will, but yours be done." Usually, it's more like, *"Lord, I need this, and I need it now."* We have a tendency to see God not as someone we bring our requests to, but rather like we see a restaurant where we go up to the counter and order what we want, and if we don't get it we get agitated. Is that the way prayer works? Of course not! We shouldn't expect God to be at our beckon call. God is the creator of this universe, and He is

going to allow things to progress as He sees fit, not as you and I may demand or expect.

Secondly, let's look closely at God the Father's answer to this prayer. Yes, the Father says no to Jesus. Jesus wants to be freed from the inevitable death he was going to have to face, but the Father said no.

The important lesson for us is that we need to realize how much more God has an ultimate perfect plan and purpose. I think a lot of times we come to God thinking that we know what's best for us. But, we will learn fairly quickly that the Lord knows best.

What might have happened if the Father had granted his Son's request? Well, for starters, we certainly wouldn't be here at church this morning. There would have been no sacrifice of the Lamb of God that would bring about forgiveness of sins. Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, we all would be lost.

### **Conclusion**

-Today as believers we can learn to accept God's negative responses by realizing that they too are part of God's plan and have a definite purpose to carry out.

-God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. He will always be with us to the very end. We learn in 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."* It's all according to His purpose. Therefore, we as believers need to align our will to His purpose.

The bottom line in accepting a no answer from God is to learn to be submissive. We must learn to submit our wills to His will. In Romans 12:2 we are instructed to *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* God has a perfect will for us. We must seek it. Sometimes that involves Him saying No to our request!

### **God's No is not a Rejection But a Redirection**

Oswald J. Smith's example:

The year was 1920. The scene was the examining board for selecting missionaries. Standing before the board was a young man named Oswald Smith. One dream dominated his heart. He wanted to be a missionary. Over and over again, he prayed, "Lord, I want to go as a missionary for you. Open a door of service for me." Now, at last, his prayer would be answered. When the examination was over, the board turned Oswald Smith down. He did not meet their qualifications. He failed the test.

Oswald Smith had set his direction, but now life gave him a detour. What would he do? As Oswald Smith prayed, God planted another idea in his heart. If he could not go as a missionary, he would build a church which could send out missionaries. And that is what he did. Oswald Smith pastored The People's Church in Toronto, Canada, which sent out more missionaries than any other church at that time. Oswald Smith brought God into the situation, and God transformed his detour into a main thoroughfare of service.

Here is the question for us: How do we respond when God says no? How do I respond when life doesn't go the way I want it to – even if I pray really, really hard? We say that we want to be disciples or Christ followers, but do we only worship when things are going our way? What happens when God says no? What happens to our serving and our giving and our obeying? Do we stick to our resolve and honour Him with our whole lives, no matter what? Or when we start to feel a little heat, do we bow the knee to something else other than God?

So once again here is the standard we are being called too. It is not wrong to pray and ask for stuff. And God is able to answer all our prayers and handle everything that life throws at us. And it's kind of easy to follow Him and praise Him when that is happening. The call – the challenge for all of us – is to stay faithful to God even if He says no, to honour Him with our lives (our words, thoughts and actions) even when we don't get everything we want, or understand where he is leading us. But God reminds us also that He meets us in the difficult times and brings us through it.

We also need to remember that while God may answer some prayers with a no, He will never answer a person's turning to Him with a no. No matter what you've done, no matter what kind of life you have lived, God will never say no to you coming to Him. God will forgive you. God is always willing to welcome you into His kingdom, if only you will be willing to come.

I like what Pastor Bill Hybels said once, "If the request is wrong, God says, No. If the timing is wrong, God says, Slow. If you are wrong, God says, Grow. But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, Go!"

### **Anonymous Confederate Soldier's Prayer**

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,  
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.  
I asked for health, that I might do greater things,  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy,  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing I asked for – but everything I had hoped for.  
Almost, in spite of myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

British pastor Galvin Reid tells about meeting a young man who had fallen down a flight of stairs as a baby and shattered his back. He had been in and out of hospitals most of his young life and through all the prayers it seemed God didn't answer his request. Yet he made the astounding comment that he thinks God is fair. Reid asked him, "How old are you?" The boy said, "Seventeen." Reid asked, "How many years have you spend in hospitals?" The boy said, "Thirteen years." The pastor said with astonishment, "And you think that is fair?" And the boy replied: "*Well, God has all eternity to make it up to me.*"

And He will make it up. God promises a time when there will be no more crying, no more tears, no more pain and suffering, when we will be reunited with God in perfect harmony, forever. Let the words of 1 Corinthians 2:9 soak into your soul: "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*" That's absolutely breath-taking, isn't it? Heaven is waiting for us!

Trust God when He says no. Believe that He has a purpose for you and a plan.