

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN GOD SAYS, “NO”?

Read **2Sam 12:13-23**.

What do you do when God says “No”?!

Over and over again, the Scriptures affirm that God will grant the prayers of the faithful.

- a. **Matt 7:7-11** – “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”
- b. **1Jn 3:22** – “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

And yet, there are times when God says “No.”

- a. Example: David – **2Sam 12:13-18**
- b. Example: Jesus – **Matt 26:36-46**
- c. Example: Paul – **2Cor 12:7-10**

What do you do ...

- a. when you pray that a sick loved one be healed, AND GOD SAYS “NO”?
- b. when you pray that a loved one’s life be spared AND GOD SAYS “NO”?
- c. when you pray that you might be spared some terrible trial, AND GOD SAYS “NO”?
- d. when you’ve prayed for the one thing that you want more than anything else in all the world, AND GOD SAYS “NO”?

1. WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN GOD SAYS, “NO”???

When God says “No” some people question the power of God.

- a. But if you believe the Bible, you can’t do that.
 - ▶ **Job 42:2** – “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.”
 - ▶ **Matt 19:26** – Jesus said: “... with God all things are possible.”
 - ▶ **Lk 1:37** – The angel Gabriel assured Mary: “For with God nothing will be impossible.”
 - ▶ **Eph 3:20** – “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ...”

When God says “No” some people question the love of God.

- a. But if you believe the Bible, you can’t do that.
 - ▶ God proved His love for you once and for all at Calvary.
 - ∞ **Jn 3:16**
 - ∞ **Rom 5:6-8** – “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - ∞ **Eph 2:1-7** – “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
 - ∞ **1Jn 4:9-10** – “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
 - ∞ **Jim McGuigan**: “This man [Paul], in essence, has told us: ‘If I had children and they were starving to death, bellies distended, eyes sunken, too weak to cry, but able yet to beg with their eyes for food from me, their father, and I could provide nothing; if that were the case,

I'd remain unconvinced that God didn't love me. If I had a wife who was being raped and humiliated before my very eyes; and if her cries for help were going up endlessly and I could only watch in helpless anguish and frustration, this would not convince me that God doesn't love me. And if they were torturing me until I was on the verge of insanity; and if I pleaded with blood-red earnestness to God to bring it all to an end, and prayed to no avail – this wouldn't convince me that God doesn't love me!

- ∞ "... Dorothy Sayers was right. After Jesus Christ nothing else is really real! Let no man say, Because of war and famine and disease I cannot believe in a loving God. Let him look back to Golgotha and see the divine exhibition which took place in the midst of war and cursing and wickedness. To the time and place where God said: I DO love you. I will ALWAYS love you. Trust me!" (The Book Of Romans, pp. 260-261)

When God says "No" some people question the justice of God.

- a. But if you believe the Bible, you can't do that – Gen 18:25; Psa 19:9; Psa 89:14; Psa 97:2
 - ▶ What some see as injustice on God's part is really patience and longsuffering.
 - ∞ 2Pet 3:9 – "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
 - ▶ And it is also true that the final settling of all accounts comes at the end of this life!
 - ∞ Eccl 8:11-13 – "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. 12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God."
 - ∞ 2Th 1:4-10

When God says "No" some people deny the existence of God.

- a. But if you are an honest person, you can't do that.
 - ▶ Psa 14:1 – "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"
 - ▶ Psa 19:1 – "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork."
 - ▶ Rom 1:20 – "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ..."

2. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN GOD SAYS, "NO"???

When God says "No" you should examine your life.

- a. It may be that you have not met the conditions of acceptable prayer.
- b. God will not grant your requests unless ...
 - ▶ you pray in faith – Jas 1:5-8
 - ▶ you pray humbly – Lk 18:9-14 (also Matt 6:5)
 - ▶ you pray sincerely – Matt 15:7-9; Psa 17:1; Matt 5:5-8
 - ▶ you pray seriously – 1Pet 4:7
 - ▶ you pray with the right motives – Jas 4:1-4
 - ▶ you pray frequently – Rom 12:12; Col 4:2; 1Th 5:16-18
 - ▶ you pray persistently – Lk 18:1-8; Matt 7:7-8
 - ▶ you pray fervently – Eph 6:18; Jas 5:17
 - ▶ you pray with a truly thankful heart – Php 4:6-7
 - ▶ you forgive all who have repented of the sins they have committed against you – Mk 11:25-26
 - ▶ your prayer is in keeping with God's will – 1Jn 5:14-15; Matt 26:39-44; Jas 4:13-15
 - ▶ you live faithfully – 1Jn 3:21-22, Jas 5:16
 - ∞ God will not grant the requests of those who live in rebellion or indifference to His will – Psa 34:15-18; Psa 66:18; Prov 15:8, 29; Prov 28:9; Isa 1:10-17; Isa 59:1-2; Mic 3:1-4
 - ▶ you give honor to your wife/husband – 1Pet 3:7
 - ▶ you do your part
 - ∞ God tells us to *pray* for our daily bread (Matt 6:11), and He tells us to *work* for our daily bread (2Th 3:10)
 - ∞ "the Lord helps those who help themselves"
- c. So, when God says "No," you need to examine yourself to see whether or not you have met the conditions of acceptable prayer – 2Cor 13:5
- d. But, on the other hand, you must not immediately and automatically blame yourself.
 - ▶ Sometimes God says "No" even when we have done all that we can do.
 - ∞ Example: Jesus – Matt 26:36-46

When you think God has said “No” you should realize that you may have misunderstood – it may be that what He really said was, “Wait.”

- a. Abraham had to wait 25 years for God to give him the son he had promised him – Gen 12:1-4; Gen 21:1-5
- b. Joseph had to wait 2 long years in prison before God, in His providence, caused him to be released – Gen 40:9 - 41:45
- c. Job had to wait for what must have seemed an eternity before he was given relief from his suffering.
- d. There is also the example of the martyred saints in Rev 6:9-11 (and Rev 20: 4-6) crying out, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood?”
 - ▶ “... and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”
- e. We are often impatient – Psa 69:1-3.
 - ▶ But it is the simple truth that the Lord does not operate on our timetable – 2Pet 3:8 – “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

When God says “No” you should realize that there are some things that God can not do.

- a. God can not do that which is intrinsically impossible.
 - ▶ It is true that God is all-powerful, but that simply means that He can do whatever is possible for deity to do.
 - ▶ I know what Luke 1:37 says (“For with God nothing will be impossible”) ... but see also Matt 17:20; Heb 6:18
- b. There are some things which simply cannot be done at all; they are not subject to power ... not even infinite power.
 - ▶ God cannot do two mutually exclusive things at the same time.
 - ∞ He cannot make a four-sided triangle
 - ∞ He cannot make a square circle
 - ∞ He cannot make a thing be and not be at the same time
 - ∞ He cannot make a rock so large that He cannot lift it
 - ∞ He cannot give man free-will and make him incapable of sinning
- c. C. S. Lewis: “His omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible. You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense. This is no limit to His power. If you choose to say ‘God can give a creature free-will and at the same time withhold free-will from him,’ you have not succeeded in saying anything about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words ‘God can.’ ... It is no more possible for God than for the weakest of His creatures to carry out both of two mutually exclusive alternatives; not because His power meets an obstacle, but because nonsense remains nonsense even when we talk it about God.” (The Problem Of Pain, p. 28)
 - ▶ No power, not even infinite power, can create a being who is a free moral agent and who is yet beyond even the possibility of sinning.

When God says “No” you should remember that there are some things that God will not do.

- a. God will not violate man’s free-will.
 - ▶ God will not save sinners apart from the gospel – Jn 6:44-45; Rom 16:17
 - ▶ God will not save your lost loved ones for whom you pray, without their obedience to the gospel – Lk 16:27-31
 - ▶ God will not heal every sick person for whom faithful Christians pray.
 - ∞ If He did, we would live forever right here on earth as long as we continued to pray for one another
 - + But it is appointed unto man once to die – Heb 9:27
 - + That means that sometimes God is going to say “No” even when faithful Christians pray for healing.
- b. God will not always shield the righteous from trials and tribulations.
 - ▶ One reason why God will not always shield the righteous is because He can use trials and tribulations to mold us into the kind of people He wants us to be.
 - ∞ Trials and tribulations teach us humility – 2Cor 12:7-10
 - ∞ They teach us to depend upon God – 2Cor 1:9
 - ∞ They teach us to be sympathetic and compassionate – 2Cor 1:3-4; cf Heb 2:9-18
 - ∞ They build character.
 - ∞ They develop steadfastness within us – Rom 5:3-5
 - ∞ They help us learn obedience – Psa 119:67,71; Heb 5:8
 - ▶ But He has promised that we will not be faced with more than we can endure – 1Cor 10:13

- c. God will not protect us from the consequences of our own sins.
 - ▶ Example: David – **2Sam 11:1ff**
- d. God will not say “Yes” when it would be harmful to you, or to others, or to the cause of Christ.
 - ▶ Sometimes the only answer that Love can give is “No”
 - ∞ What do you say when your two-year-old wants to play with the butcher knife?
 - ∞ Read **Lk 11:9-13**. What if he asked for a stone? a serpent? a scorpion?

When you think God has said “No” you should remember that sometimes God says “Yes” in an unexpected way.

- a. Example: Naaman the leper – **2Kgs 5:1-14**
- b. Example: An unknown Confederate soldier wrote:
 - 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 that I asked for, but everything I had hoped for.*

Finally: When God says “No” you should trust Him – no matter what!

- a. Though all the demons of hell encamp around your soul, you should trust God:
 - ▶ **Hab 3:17-19** – “Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls – 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.”