



Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

The number of times my parents told me “No” is truly incalculable. It is actually quite staggering when you think about it. Now do not misunderstand me, my parents were wonderfully loving, nurturing and giving. In fact, that’s the point. My parents loved me enough to tell me “No.” They loved me enough to tell me “No” when all I wanted for dinner was Fun Dip and a Coke. They loved me enough to tell me “No” when I wanted to sleep outside all night during a lightning storm. They loved me enough to tell me “No” when I wanted to skip church or youth group to watch TV, sleep in, go out with my friends or play sports. They loved me enough to tell me “No” when I wanted to date a girl who they knew was not a Christian. One of the clearest examples I have that my parents loved me was their willingness to say “No” to something I truly wanted at the time, yet something they truly knew was not good for me.

Have you ever thanked God for saying “No” to you? I am not referring to what are commonly called God’s “unanswered prayers.” To be sure, sometimes God will not answer a person’s prayer because of unrepentant or unconfessed sin (Ps.66:18; Is.1:15, 59:2), because it is offered with sinful intention (Jms.4:3), or because the person is mired in doubt or unbelief (Jms.1:6-7). My focus, however, is not when God does not answer but when He does answer with a gentle but resounding “No.” There are times when, out of His infinite love and immense mercy, God will hear the requests of His children and sovereignly decline.

Perhaps the clearest example of this in the New Testament is found in the twelfth chapter of the book of 2 Corinthians: *“So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me”* (vs.7-8). Clearly, Paul desperately wanted God to remove this “thorn” – which he described as “a messenger of Satan” (vs.7). The Greek word translated “harass” (a rather soft translation) literally refers to being struck or beaten (see Matt.26:67; 1Cor.4:11; 1Pet.2:20).

Did God answer Paul’s earnest prayer? Yes. *“... [the Lord] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’”* (vs.9). In effect, the Lord said, “No.” Why did God refuse to remove Paul’s thorn? The answer is stated twice in two verses: *“to keep me from becoming conceited”* (vs.7, 8). In His infinite knowledge and wisdom, God knew that Paul’s thorn would serve as an instrument of humility – keeping Paul faithfully dependent on God.

Remarkably, Paul’s response displayed a great understanding of the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-benevolent God. For he responded by saying, *“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (vs.9). Paul knew that God knows what is best, and that God knows how to give good gifts to His children (Matt.7:9-11; Jms.1:17). Paul also understood that the power of God’s grace was more than sufficient to perfect his inadequacies.

The truth is, some of God’s greatest blessings come into our lives when He declines our petitions. God’s love for us is so great that He will say “No” to that which He knows is harmful to us. Trust always in God’s character and heart, even when you cannot hear His voice or see His hand.

Together in and for Christ,
Pastor David
(8/10/26)

Scripture Readings for the Week (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #32):

Leviticus 25-27; 1 Chronicles 1-4; Psalm 93-95; Proverbs 16; Daniel 1-6; John 3-4; 2 Thess. 1-3

Recommended Reading:

“Trusting God” by Jerry Bridges