

SOMETIMES GOD SAYS NO

(2 Corinthians 12:2-10)

Intro: Sometimes God says no.

- We go through difficult times.
 - #We hurt.
 - #We struggle.
 - #We grieve.
- We pray.
 - #For comfort.
 - #For strength.
 - #For healing.
- As the faithful people of God.
 - #We believe that we are deserving.
 - #We believe that God is able.
- Sometimes God says no.

I. God Said No To Paul.

A. Paul Had A Thorn In The Flesh.

1. We don't know exactly what that was.
 - a. Most believe that it was a physical ailment of some kind
 - Epilepsy.
 - Leprosy.
 - Malaria.
 - Hysteria.
 - Depression.
 - Eye trouble.
 - Speech impediment.
 - #Take your pick.
 - #Add your own diagnosis.
 - #We don't know for sure.
 - b. Few have even speculated.
 - It wasn't a physical problem at all.
 - But an antagonistic opponent.
 - #Thorn in his side.
 - #Pain in the butt.
 - *We might say.
 - c. I tend to view it as a physical problem of some kind.
 - Thorn in the flesh.
2. Whatever it was, Paul wanted to be rid of it.

- B. If Ever Someone Deserved To Be Healed, It Was Paul.
 - 1. He was the chief missionary in the early church.
 - a. He had important work to do for the Lord.
 - Word to preach.
 - Churches to plant.
 - b. No doubt that work would have been easier.
 - If Paul didn't have this thorn in the flesh.
 - #Distracting him.
 - #Slowing him down.
 - 2. Paul prayed that God would take it away.
 - a. Three times Paul prayed.
 - I take that to mean.
 - #Not 1-2-3 and he quit.
 - But rather that he prayed:
 - #Again.
 - #Again.
 - #Again.
 - b. Again and again and again.
 - God said no.
 - #God is like that sometimes.

II. Sometimes It Happens To Us.

- A. It Happened To Alice.
 - 1. Alice is a woman I met.
 - a. In my days as a hospital chaplain.
 - 2. One Easter Sunday.
 - a. Alice was getting ready to go to church.
 - Pentecostal church.
 - #If I remember correctly.
 - b. Before she got into the car to go.
 - Alice decided to take a stroll through her yard.
 - #To admire the flowers in her garden.
 - On her stroll through the yard.
 - #Alice stepped in a hole.
 - *Down she went.
 - *All 250+ pounds of her.
 - *She broke her leg.
 - c. Instead of going to church.
 - Alice landed in the hospital.

3. Alice's break was a bad one.
 - a. Traction.
 - Didn't work.
 - b. Several different casts.
 - Still no healing.
 - c. Surgery.
 - Infection set in.
 - d. Finally her leg was amputated.
 - Alice knew the pain of thorns.
4. Alice also knew how to pray.
 - a. I got to know Alice quite well.
 - Days of her hospitalization.
 - #Turned into weeks.
 - The weeks turned into months.
 - b. During my visits we always prayed.
 - I prayed for Alice.
 - Alice prayed for me.
5. God said yes to so many of our prayers.
 - a. Endurance.
 - b. Courage.
 - c. Faith.
6. But God said no to healing.
 - a. Alice did eventually manage to go home.
 - But not for long.
 - She was back in the hospital.
 - #Within a matter of days.
 - b. She never fully recovered.
 - c. She ended up dying.
 - From the complications of her broken leg.
7. Sometimes God says no.

B. Sometimes God Says No To Us.

1. Maybe our thorn is physical.
 - a. Pain.
 - b. Lump.
 - c. Disease.
 - d. Disorder.
2. Maybe it's a relationship.
 - a. Parent.
 - b. Child.
 - c. Spouse.
 - d. Sibling.
 - e. Neighbor.
 - f. Boss.

3. Maybe it's a job.
 - a. Boring.
 - b. Unfulfilling.
 - c. Unrewarding.
 - We're not valued.
 - We don't feel appreciated.
4. We pray.
 - a. We want to be better.
 - b. We want things to be better.
 - In addition to:
 - #Seeing our doctor.
 - #Taking our medicine.
 - #Watching Dr. Phil.
 - #Listening to Oprah.
 - We pray.
 - #Believing that we are worthy.
 - #Believing that God is able.
5. Sometimes God says no.
 - a. God is like that sometimes.

III. But No Is Not God's Only Word To Us.

- A. Paul Heard Another Word.
 1. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:9.
 2. Paul was a strong man.
 - a. Physically strong.
 - In spite of his thorn in the flesh.
 - #He must have been.
 - All of the miles he put on his sandals.
 - #For the sake of the Gospel.
 - All of the difficulties he mentions in v. 10.
 - #Insults.
 - #Hardships.
 - #Persecutions.
 - #Calamities.
 - Not to mention the list from 11:23-29.
 - #39 lashes.
 - *At the hands of his own people, the Jews.
 - *5x.
 - #Beaten with rods.
 - *At the hands of the Romans.
 - *3x.
 - #Stoned.
 - *1x.

- #Shipwrecked.
 - *3x.
- #Imprisoned.
 - *More than once.
- #Adrift at sea.
 - *For more than 24 hours.
- #In danger from:
 - *Floods.
 - *Robbers.
 - *Jews.
 - *Gentiles.
 - +In the cities.
 - +In the wilderness.
 - +On the high seas.
- #He experienced:
 - *Hunger.
 - *Thirst.
 - *Nakedness.
 - *Sleepless nights.
- It's a wonder Paul was never struck by lightning.
 - #More than once.
 - *I hope he had a good health insurance plan.
- Paul was no 90-pound weakling.
 - #To survive all that.
- b. Spiritually strong.
 - Preaching to unbelievers.
 - Facing:
 - #Doubters.
 - #Detractors.
 - Contending with competitors.
 - #Who preached a different gospel.
- 3. Paul was engaged in a bragging contest.
 - a. With those whom he called "Super apostles."
 - 2 Corinthians 11:5.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:11.
 - #Who claimed to have a special message from God.
 - b. Paul had had more visions and revelations than anyone.
 - In the body.
 - Out of the body.
 - #He didn't know.
 - Dreams.
 - Visions.
 - Near-death experiences.
 - #It was out of this world.
 - #He had:
 - *Seen.
 - *Heard.
 - +Things too sacred to repeat.

- c. Paul could have out-bragged most anyone.
- d. That was part of the problem.
 - “In order to keep me from getting too big for my britches because of the wonderful things I saw, I was given a thorn in the flesh.”
 - #“A messenger of Satan.”
 - #“To torment me.”
 - *“To keep me from bragging too much.”
 - *“To keep me from believing my own press clippings.”
 - *“To get my attention.”

4. Thorn in the flesh.

- a. Got Paul's attention, alright.
- b. Then he wanted to get rid of it.

5. God said no.

- a. “My grace is sufficient for you.”
- b. “My strength is made perfect in your weakness.”
- c. “I'm not healing you.”
- d. “But I'll make a way for you to deal with it.”

B. Do You Suppose That Maybe That Is The Same Word Jesus Heard?

1. Night before his crucifixion.

- a. Where was Jesus?
 - He was in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- b. What was he doing?
 - He was praying.
- c. What was he praying for?
 - He was praying for deliverance.
 - #“I don't want to go through with this.”
 - #“Can't we try Plan B?”
 - #“Isn't there another way?”
 - #“Remove this cup of suffering from me.”
 - *Mark 14:36.
 - *Matthew 26:39,42.
 - *Luke 22:42.

2. I believe that Jesus was delivered.

- a. But he wasn't delivered by avoiding.
 - Pain.
 - Suffering.
 - #Of the cross.
- b. He was delivered as he was given:
 - Grace.
 - Strength.
 - #Endure.
 - #Thereby to overcome.

3. God delivers us, too.
 - a. But it isn't always so much from the struggle.
 - b. God delivers us through the struggle.
 - As he gives us:
 - #Grace.
 - #Strength.
 - *Not just to endure.
 - *But to endure faithfully.
 - +To be able to keep the faith.
 - =No matter what.

Concl: Sometimes God says no.

But always God says:

- “My grace is sufficient for you.”
- “For my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

We hear it:

- From the cross.
- At the font.
- At the table.
 - “My grace is sufficient for you.”