

## **The Blessing of God Saying “No!”**

### **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 with 2Samuel 12:15-23**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 9-20-2009

## **Introduction**

Charles Spurgeon once said, “I usually feel more dissatisfied with my prayers than with anything else I do.”<sup>1</sup> Does anyone else have to make that their confession? I would have to agree with that statement. I really want to grow in my prayer life. But for me, a close second to dissatisfaction with my prayer life would be my dissatisfaction with my responses to God’s answers to prayer. How many times do we forget to thank God? We ask God to bless the food, but do we thank Him that we haven’t gotten food poisoning or that we had food that was enjoyable. I need to be more thankful, and I need to be more ready to worship God when God says “No.”

Job 1 tells us that Job prayed daily for his children’s well-being, and God answered those prayers for many years. But one day God said “No” and allowed everyone of Job’s children to be killed. I’ve often wondered how I would respond to God if He did that me. I trust that I would respond the same way that Job did. But you know, apart from God’s grace, it would be tough to do. Job wept and mourned. But that wasn’t all that he did. Job 1 says,

**Job 1:20 ¶ Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.**

**Job 1:21 And he said:**

**“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,  
And naked shall I return there.**

**The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;  
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”**

**Job 1:22 ¶ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.**

We are going to be looking today at the subject of God’s “No” answers to our prayers. This is a theology of “No.” And for those of you who are curious, we are going to depart from our Acts series for three or four weeks to deal with some questions that most of us face from time to time. And today’s topic is a big one. Some of you get discouraged when it seems as if God is not answering your prayers. But if you are a believer, God does not ignore you. It is more correct to say that God answers, Yes, No, or

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<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon, *Collected Sermons*, vol. 17, p. 689.

Wait. And Scripture indicates that a “No!” answer from God is a blessing in disguise – sometimes a tremendous blessing. This is going to be a topical sermon that ranges all over the Bible. And if you want to follow along, you may want to turn to 2 Samuel 12:15-23 for the first point. This is where God says “No” to David’s prayer.

## I. Some Reasons Why It Is Good For God To Say “No!”

### *A. Answers no for discipline reasons (2 Sam. 12:15-23; Ps. 98:8)*

And God’s reason for the “No” was quite different for David than it was for Job. The book of Job is quite clear that God’s answer of “No” was not because of Job’s sin.

But we will start with David. God gives two reasons for saying “No” to David’s prayer for his son. The first was that both David & Bathsheba needed God’s loving discipline. And you might think, “But what about the child. It’s not fair that the child gets killed because of the parents!” Let me assure you that the child was delighted to get to heaven quicker than David. He had no grief - only the parents did. So it was no hardship for the child. Don’t feel sorry for the child.

And don’t feel sorry for David and Bathsheba. This was the hand of God’s loving discipline. Notice verses 13-14: **Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; [What wonderful words. David was restored to fellowship with God, even after a huge sin like that. God didn’t put him into the doghouse and make David sweat it out. No, there was instant fellowship. The next words also indicate that there was a reduction of discipline.] you shall not die [there is a lessening of God’s discipline; but notice verse 14] However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.”** They needed to learn that the way of a transgressor is hard. Some people think that God doesn’t discipline us, and they take God’s forgiveness so much for granted that they sin without any worries.

Jay Adams tells the story of a woman who was defrauded by a Christian organization in California. She confronted them for their theft. When officials of that organization sought her forgiveness, she forgave them. She then asked for her money back and was promptly told that having forgiven them of their sin, she was no longer entitled to a return of the funds. As a result, this woman lost her house to pay for the financial loss. That’s a total misunderstanding of forgiveness. Forgiveness restores fellowship, but it

doesn't do away with the need for restitution or discipline. In this case, it lessened the severity of the discipline, but discipline had to come. This is why Psalm 99:8 says, **You answered them, O LORD our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, though you took vengeance on their deeds.** They were forgiven, but still received a spanking from the Lord. They might have received a lesser spanking, but discipline is not an option. So sometimes God says "No" because He is disciplining us. And quick repentance may lessen the discipline just as it happened with David.

***B. For the sake of others (2Sam. 12:13-14; 1 Kings 8:18-21; Jonah)***

But there was a second reason God gave to David. He said, **"because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."** It was for the sake of what others might think. It was for testimony sake. God didn't want others to blaspheme God's holiness and His character by totally overlooking this deliberate rebellion on the part of David. The spiritual condition of many other people was at stake here. God said "No" to David's prayer for the sake of others.

God said "No" to Jonah for the sake of others. Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed (and if you understood much about the Ninevites, you could understand why), but God said "No" to Jonah's desires because he wanted to save these people. In 1 Kings 8 God said "No" to David's desire to build the temple (as good as those desires were) because God wanted Solomon to have that privilege. So even apart from discipline, God will sometimes say "No" because he wants to bless others. If I knew others would be tremendously blessed by having one of my prayers answered "No," it would make the "No" worthwhile. Absolutely.

But I am going to branch off into a number of other Scriptures that give other reasons for a "No" from God. And that's why I'm calling this a topical sermon, even though we will be returning to this passage.

***C. If God Has Already Provided a Way, and There Is Action You Should Be Taking (Ex. 14:15; James 2:16; 1John 3:17)***

A third reason God will say "No" to your request if He has already provided an answer, and there is action that you should be taking. There are many examples of this in the Scripture. In Exodus 14:15 God rebuked Moses for praying, **"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.'**" That puzzled Moses because the sea was in front of him. How could he go forward? So God proceeds to tell

him, **“But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divided it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.”** OK, so now he knows. But why did God rebuke Moses before He told him that He was going to part the sea?

And the answer is that God had already shown Moses the way out. God had already answered his prayer. He had previously told Moses that whenever the glory cloud stood still, they were to camp. Whenever the glory cloud started moving forward, they were supposed to move forward and follow it wherever it went. And the glory cloud had moved and gone out over the sea, indicating that the Israelites were supposed to follow. It was clear guidance, but they were confused by the impossibility of the guidance. But the point is that God had already indicated that the way out was over the sea. It would take a later generation under Joshua to watch the waters part as their feet touched the waters, but God was indicating that it could have happened here. In his mercy He caused the cloud to leave the sea and to go behind the Israelites and park between the Egyptians and the Israelites. But there was a clear-cut case of the Lord already providing a way.

Here’s the point: if God has already enabled you and called you, there is no point in praying further. We just need to trust and obey. James says that if you can feed and clothe a person who comes to your door looking for help, your faith is dead if you just pray and wish him well. He’s going to say, “No,” to a prayer like that. “You go feed Him. I’ve already provided for him through you.” 1 John 3 says in effect, “How dare you pawn off your responsibility on someone else. I’ve providentially brought him to you.” **But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?** (1 Jn. 3:17). You can’t pray in circumstances like that unless you are willing to be the answer. Prayer without action is rebellion. And many of our prayers are prayers that we could easily answer ourselves.

Charles Spurgeon tells the story of how he met with his large board to pray for a pressing financial need. Just before they prayed he said, “Wait a minute! Before you begin this prayer meeting there is something I’d like to do.” He wrote on a piece of paper this pledge: “C.H. Spurgeon gives 50 pounds” and passed it around for others to fill in. By the time the paper returned, the prayer meeting turned into a praise meeting because the whole need was met. If your prayers for action are not being met, it may be because God is calling you to meet them. The Lord has many times stopped me from praying and called me to be the answer. Don’t be like Congressmen who want to solve problems with other people’s money and other people’s efforts. God has good reason to say “No” to such a prayer.

***D. If It Is A Sinful Request (James 4:3; Luke 9:54; 1Jn 5:14)***

Another reason sometimes given in Scripture is if the request itself is sinful. James 4:3 says, **“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”** OK? It’s a sinful prayer request. In Luke 9:54 it says, **“And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’”** This prayer request was not for God’s glory. They wanted revenge because their pride had been hurt. Christ rebuked them for having sinful attitudes. I like what E. Stanley Jones said about prayer:

Prayer is surrender--surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boathook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.<sup>2</sup>

Godly prayer should be surrender to the will of God. And obviously we want God to say “No” to any prayer that is contrary to that will. Right?

***E. If A “Yes” Would Not Be In Your Best Interests (2Cor. 12:7)***

Another reason for God’s “No” answers is that a “Yes” may not be in *our* best interests. Maybe you are asking for more money, or greater responsibility, or a new position, and God may not think that you can handle the position at this point. You haven’t become a good enough steward to not be ruined by it. Or God may know about some danger associated with that new thing that you are praying for. My mother felt so disappointed when she missed an airplane one time. You can bet she prayed that she would make that flight. But she found out later that the plane crashed because of icing. If God had answered her request, she would have lost her life. It was for her good that God said “No.” Paul says that was a reason why God did not remove his thorn in the flesh. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul says it was given **lest I should be exalted above measure.** God didn’t answer because he knew Paul needed that for his pride. So the fifth reason is that it may not be in *your* best interests to answer “Yes.” We need to remind ourselves of these things when we get frustrated with God’s “No’s.”

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<sup>2</sup> E. Stanley Jones, *Liberating Ministry From the Success Syndrome*, Tyndale, 1988, p. 73.

***F. We may not need what we are asking for (Phil. 4:19)***

Sixth, we may simply not need what we are asking for. A father wrote back to his son in college and said, “Am enclosing \$10 as you requested in your letter. Incidentally, \$10 is spelled with one zero, not two.” God sometimes does that to us, doesn’t He? He knows it’s not a need, and He doesn’t always answer every want, even though He delights in delighting us. But He says in Philippians 4:19, “**my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**” All our needs, not necessarily all our desires.

***G. If It Is Bad Timing (1Kings 19:4; 2Sam 5:5-16; ; 1 Kings 8:18-21)***

Seventh, the timing may not be right. Elijah was worn out in 1 Kings 19 and he prayed that he might be permitted to die (1 Kings 19:4). Lord I’m tired; I want to go to heaven. But it was not God’s timing. God still had more ministry for Elijah, and he wanted Elijah to pass on his mantle to Elisha. And there are other Biblical examples: David wanted to build the temple so badly, but God said “No, your son Solomon will build a house to Me.” And God gave His reasons. When Lazarus got sick, the sisters sent for Jesus and asked Him to come quickly before He died. Christ waited and let Him die because timing was essential for the glory of God.

***H. If God Has Placed You On “Time Out” Due To Other Sin (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9)***

Another reason God says “No” to a legitimate request is because He has placed us on time out until we repent of our sin. Psalm 66:18 says, “**If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.**” That’s just a flat out promise – I’m going to say No if you are holding onto rebellion. Proverbs 28:9 says, **One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination** The Psalms use the language of the sky being bronze to mean that our prayers just bounce back; God doesn’t hear. If God has us on time out because of sin that needs to be dealt with, we can pray fervently to no avail. Daily come cleansed before the Lord. It’s not in your best interests to fail to repent of and renounce your sins. 1 Peter 3:7 tells us husbands that we are going to get “No” answers to all of our prayers if we mistreat our wives. It says, “**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**” Some people think that God always has to answer our

prayers. That is simply not true. We need to understand the theology of “No” and it will make us appreciate both His “Yes’s” and His “No’s.”

***I. If God Has A Far More Glorious Solution To The Problem  
(1Kings 17:8-16; 2Chron. 25:7-13; 2Kings 4:1-7)***

But on the other hand, there are times when God says “No” simply because He wants to bring a far more glorious solution to the problem than we have been asking for. The widow of Zarephath in 1Kings 17 may have prayed for some finances to buy more food, but wasn’t it so much more glorious when God caused the oil and flour multiplying throughout the drought. Instead of bringing finances, He brought a miracle. And it gave Him glory. The prophet’s wife in 2 Kings 4 no doubt prayed that the creditors would have mercy, but God multiplied her oil so extensively that she was able to pay off the debt and live on the rest. We may choose healing, and God may choose to usher our child into the glories of heaven. Praying for healing is a good thing (we do it all the time), but heaven is far better than healing. Like I said earlier, David’s son had a far more glorious solution.

***J. It is Not Possible In God’s Plan (Matt 26:39)***

One last reason why God says “No” is that our request just may not be possible within God’s plan. Now that may seem strange because the Bible says that nothing is impossible for God. But if you read that in context it is clear that He still limits what is possible by His character and plan. Scripture says that God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13), so He won’t go contrary to His plan. It says that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18) or to sin because it is contrary to His nature (James 1:13). And so there are some things that are not possible, simply because God planned it differently. Christ prayed, **O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.** (Matt 26:39). He said, “if it is possible.” And if there had been any other possible way of salvation, the Father would have granted that request. And you can think of many examples where God has to deny someone’s prayer as impossible.

If two men are praying that they might get married to Sally, both prayers may be honorable prayers, but it is only possible to answer one. There were Christians who were fighting on both sides of World Wars I and II and prayers for victory were offered up by both sides of the American Civil War. Only one side could win. So keep in mind that within God’s will there are good prayers that cannot be answered. But always, God has His

reasons. It isn't arbitrary. His plan is perfect. His theology of "No" is a perfect theology.

So hopefully that is encouraging to know that a "No" answer is not necessarily a problem with you.

## **II. Some Ways That God Says "No!"**

### ***A. He May Make A "Yes" Providentially Impossible (David)***

But it's not enough to know that God has good reasons for saying "No." It would also be helpful to know how He says "No." Maybe this is not a "No." Maybe this is simply a "Wait." There are times when God tells us to wait – and I am thinking of preaching on that next week. But let me quickly list out a few ways in which God says "No" so that you can recognize it.

The first way God does it is by making a "Yes" providentially impossible. That was certainly the case with David here. Once the child had died, there was no more use in praying. I guess you could say that God could have raised him from the dead. There have been cases of people being raised from death. But generally speaking, it ought to be fairly clear when providentially God has made the answer impossible. It won't do much good to keep praying that a Congressman will win an election once someone else gets in. Maybe the prayer can change to "Shorten his term Lord." But he is already elected. If you have been praying that so-and-so will marry you and they marry someone else, well, that's a pretty clear answer. Sir Eric Roll told about a youngster who was praying fervently that God would make Tokyo the capital of France. It turns out he had missed that answers on his geography exam. But think of what a topsy-turvy world this would be if God answered all the whims of His children. It wouldn't be a fun place to live in. So providence is the first way that we can tell that God has already said "No" to our prayer.

### ***B. He May Say "No!" Through The Bible (Deut. 24:1-4; Jer. 3:1)***

Another way God says, "No!" is through the Bible. Let's take a case of a divorce that has happened. A man is divorced by his wife and he is praying that God will bring her to repentance and restore her as his wife. So far this is an appropriate prayer, even though a divorce has happened. 1 Corinthians 7 is quite clear that they can get reconciled even after a divorce. But if she gets married to another person, even if that person dies, the Bible



flat out forbids this man from remarrying his former wife. You will find that in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Jeremiah 3:1. He says it is an abomination. Once a second marriage has happened, reconciliation and remarriage would be offensive to God, and no matter how hard you pray, God's answer is "No! Don't do it."

Of course, there are a lot of times when the "No" is a "No" right from the beginning. Some of the things that pastors in this city are praying for they should know better. I have heard pastors pray for more welfare programs. The Bible describes that as theft and sin. That is an overreaching of the Government's roles. I heard one pastor pray for a government subsidy of his church – in fact, I kind of blew my cool when this pastor prayed for that at a visit we were making to a government official. It was embarrassing. And if pastor's can pray for unbiblical things, you know there are a lot of prayers where God has already given the answer "No" in his word. "Lord, bless this lady as she preaches." And God says, "No! Ladies shouldn't be pastors." Lord, I know that my son is living in rebellion to your word, but please bless him anyway." "No. I've already said No in My Word." We just need to fill our minds with God's Word. Much of what the church prays for is unbiblical. When God commands us to pray according to the will of God, He is commanding us to pray according to this revealed will – the Scriptures. And God can say "No!" by opening our eyes to understand the Scriptures.

***C. Guiding us to stop praying (2 Cor. 12:8-9; Deut. 3:26; 1Jn 5:15-17)***

Another way that God says "No" is through guidance. God showed Paul that he should stop praying. He did the same to Moses in Deuteronomy 3:26. Moses asked one more time to be able to go into the land of Canaan, and God told him to stop praying and to not even bring up the subject again. But I think an interesting one is the last verses of the book of 1 John where John tells us that there is sin leading to death and sin not leading to death. And if a brother is committing sin leading to death, we aren't supposed to pray for him any more. How in the world are you going to tell when *that* is? Through guidance. God gives us the go ahead to pray sometimes and at other times closes our mouths. I have had times where I have had such a strong sense that I may not pray something, that I have stopped. So guidance is one of the ways.

***D. He May Remove Your Desire (James 4:3; Psalm 37:4; 140:8)***

Another way in which God says, “No!” is to remove the desire from our hearts. What was once a compelling urgent desire in our hearts is suddenly unimportant to us. I have seen God do this many times. God replaces our desires with His desires, and the more in tune we become with God’s desires, He gives us the desires of our hearts. That’s what Psalm 37:4 says. But sanctification frequently takes care of our questions of “Why.” And I’ve given some Scriptures in the outline.

***E. He May Give Your Heart’s Desire In A Different Way (Eph. 3:20)***

Another way in which God says “No” is that He gives us our heart’s desires in a totally different way than we anticipated. Ephesians 3:20 says, **“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...”** He gives us our hearts desires, but it is beyond our even imagining. No one is going to complain if you have been praying for a \$2000 Red Chevy Caprice that you’ve seen on the car lot if God gives you a blue \$10,000 car with 80,000 less miles on it. And you can think of other ways in which God doesn’t give us our request, but He gives us something far better. And you are happy with that.

The mother of Augustine had prayed fervently for her son’s salvation. She begged him not to go to Rome, and when it looked like he had his heart set on the trip, she prayed fervently that God would not let him go. She feared that the ungodly city of Rome would absolutely corrupt him. God did not answer her prayer, and he went after all. But it was in Rome that he got converted. In commenting on his mother’s prayer, Augustine said, “God did not grant her petition, but he gave her her desire.” So even the ways in which God says “No” are a blessing designed for our good and His glory.

**III. What Seems Like a “No!” May Actually Be A Yes (Matt 15:21-28)**

Before I make my last three applications, let me point out that what seems like a “No!” may actually be a “Yes.” Sometimes people have misinterpreted God’s delays as a “No” and they have stopped praying. Listen to the following dialogue that Jesus had with the Syrophonecian woman in Matthew 15:

**Matthew 15:21 ¶ Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.**

**Matthew 15:22** And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”

**Matthew 15:23** ¶ But He answered her not a word.

Doesn't it sometimes feel that way to us? It feels like God's not answering us a word. It says,

And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”

**Matthew 15:24** ¶ But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

**Matthew 15:25** ¶ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

**Matthew 15:26** ¶ But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.”

So far you would assume that His answer was “No” right? But verse 27 continues the story:

**Matthew 15:27** ¶ And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”

**Matthew 15:28** ¶ Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

God was actually drawing her heart out to Him in faith when He didn't answer right away. What appeared to be a “No” answer was just a test to see if she would persevere in faith. Let me tell you a story of a woman who temporarily failed that test. Kirk Johnston recorded this story in one of his books.

And let me back up a little bit in the story and tell about how his friend Roger met Mr. Hanover. Roger had just gotten discharged from the army after the War, and was hitchhiking home. And a businessman by the name of Hanover picked him up in his Cadillac, and started conversing with him. After talking about many different things, Roger, who was a Christian, felt this Holy Spirit compulsion to witness to this successful businessman who was around 50 years of age. But he was shy about it and kept putting it off. But the further along the road that he went, the more the compulsion to witness became. About thirty minutes from home he got up the courage, cleared his throat and said, “Mr. Hanover, I would like to talk to you about something important.” He then proceeded to explain the way of salvation, asking him if he wanted to pray to receive Christ.

To Roger's astonishment, the Cadillac immediately pulled over to the side of the road. He was fully expecting to get kicked out, but the

businessman started to weep, and bowing his head on the steering wheel he repented of his sin and asked God to justify him and save him. He then thanked Roger and said, “This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me.” And he gave him his business card.

Five years went by, and on one of his own business trips to Chicago, Roger decided to look in on Mr. Hanover. When he got to Hanover Enterprises, the receptionist said that Mr. Hanover was not available, but that he could see his wife. He was ushered into her office, where she asked him how he knew her husband. Roger told how her husband had given him a ride when hitchhiking home after the war. And she said, “Can you tell me when that was?” And he said, “It was May 7, five years ago, the day I was discharged from the army.” “Anything special about that day?” Roger hesitated. He was wondering if he should mention that he had witnessed to the man. But he decided to take the plunge.

He said, “Mrs. Hanover, I explained the gospel. He pulled over to the side of the road and wept against the steering wheel. He gave his life to Christ that day.” To his embarrassment she started weeping and weeping, explosive sobs shaking her body. Finally, when she was able to get a grip on herself, she sobbed, “I had prayed for my husband's salvation for years. I believed God would save him.” But she thought he never had. She said, “He was in a car crash after he let you out of the car. He never got home. You see--I thought God had not kept His promise.” And continuing to weep, she added, “I stopped living for God five years ago because I thought He had not kept His word!”<sup>3</sup>

Well, that was a case where an apparent “No” was actually a “Yes” all along. She had misinterpreted God’s providence, and in God’s good providence He let her know. When we get to heaven we will probably learn of answered prayers that we were not aware of. Don’t confuse a “Wait” with a “No.”

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<sup>3</sup> J. Kirk Johnston, *Why Christians Sin*, Discovery House, 1992, pp. 39-41.

#### IV. Some Additional Lessons From The “No!” Passages Of Scripture (2 Sam. 12; Jer. 18:7-8; Rom. 8:26-28)

*A. Until you clearly hear a “No” it is safe to persevere in prayers if they are grounded in the Scriptures (2Sam. 12:14-17; Jer. 18:7-8; Jonah)*

But now that we have seen the reasons for God’s answers of “No,” and the ways that God has said “No,” let’s go back to 2 Samuel 12, and I want to look at three more applications that we can make from this passage. Look at verse 14. Nathan says, **The child also who is born to you shall surely die.** Notice the word “surely.” Now here’s the question: Was David living in rebellion to God’s declaration by fasting and praying? I don’t think so. God didn’t command him not to pray. I think he was being a model of avoiding the problem of fatalism. And there are a lot of people who are confused on this when it comes to prayer.

I have actually heard people say that they have given up praying that America would be spared from judgment because in their mind it is too late according to Romans 1. They believe God has said “No” before they start praying. But I want you to notice how the story goes in verses 15-17. **Then Nathan departed to his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became very ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them.** Why did David pray so earnestly for the child? Hadn’t God already made His “No” quire clear? Wasn’t this a waste of energy? Well, think about the city of Nineveh. Jonah had told Nivenveh that in 40 days it was going to be destroyed. Why wasn’t it? Because of the genuine and deep repentance of the city (which, by the way, was a God-given repentance). In fact, Jonah anticipated that. He complains that this was the whole reason he didn’t want to come in the first place because he was afraid they would repent and that God would relent. He knew the way God worked.

You see, Jeremiah 18 says that all God’s prophecies of judgment are conditional. He says, **The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it...** (vv. 7-8). David knows that it is never sinful to repent or to pray for mercy; He knows that the child is not dead yet, so he perseveres in prayer. And we should take our cue from

David. As long as you can claim the Scriptures as the basis for your prayers, keep praying till a “Yes” becomes impossible or God leads you to stop praying. When we are praying according to God’s will, we are not trying to guess God’s will; we are praying according to the Scriptures. You are not going to make God upset if you are claiming His Word.

***B. When God says “No” learn to submit the way David and Job did (2Sam. 12:18-23)***

But a second application is this: once it becomes impossible for your prayers to be answered, make sure that you have an attitude of submission to God like David did. Verses 18-23 show David’s ability to turn it all over to God once the final decision was made and to not grow bitter. **Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, “Indeed, while the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!”** When David saw that his servants were whispering, **David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” And they said, “He is dead.” So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshipped.** David had such a confidence that God’s “No’s” are always the best that He is able to worship and adore God in faith even while there was still hurt in his heart. This was the attitude of Job. This is the attitude of faith that will give us victory and favor with God. Verse 20 goes on:

**Then he went to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, “What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” So he said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, “Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?” But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. Are you able to go about life even after God says a final “No” to you? That should be your goal.**

***C. Learn to be led by the Spirit in prayer (2Sam 12 with Psalm 51:11; Rom. 8:14-17,26-28)***

A third lesson that I draw from this whole subject is that we need to learn to be led by the Spirit in our prayer life. David’s prayer, **“O do not take your Holy Spirit from me”** needs to be our prayer. God is gracious,

and even during those times when we are praying wrongly, the Spirit takes over and intercedes within us. Paul said this in Romans 8, **Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.** Do you see how Paul is connecting those two doctrines. Even during those prayers where we are asking something out of God's will, the Spirit knows our hearts and our true needs and He is interceding to the Father from within us *so that* all things will work together for our good. If you did not offer up any prayers, fearing that you might pray wrongly, the Spirit could not take those prayers and perfect them with His intercession. So we shouldn't be afraid of praying, just because there might be a "No." But the moment we realize that God has said "No," we should be so in tune with God's will being done that we can submit and worship. And it is God's Spirit who can lead us through the Scriptures on what to do.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, let me read a poem written by a Confederate soldier who had many answers of "No" to his prayer life, and yet he was able to rejoice in God's better plan. He said,

I asked God for strength that I might achieve.

I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked God 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...

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am among all men most richly blessed.

May we be blessed through godly responses to God's "No's." Amen





# **The Blessing of God Saying “No!”**

## **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 with 2Samuel 12:15-23**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 9-20-2009

### Introduction

- I. Some Reasons Why It Is Good For God To Say “No!”
  - A. Answers no for discipline reasons (2 Sam. 12:15-23; Ps. 98:8)
  - B. For the sake of others (2Sam. 12:13-14; 1 Kings 8:18-21; Jonah)
  - C. If God Has Already Provided a Way, and There Is Action You Should Be Taking (Ex. 14:15; James 2:16; 1John 3:17)
  - D. If It Is A Sinful Request (James 4:3; Luke 9:54; 1Jn 5:14)
  - E. If A “Yes” Would Not Be In Your Best Interests (2Cor. 12:7)
  - F. We may not need what we are asking for (Phil. 4:19)
  - G. If It Is Bad Timing (1Kings 19:4; 2Sam 5:5-16; ; 1 Kings 8:18-21)
  - H. If God Has Placed You On “Time Out” Due To Other Sin (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9)
  - I. If God Has A Far More Glorious Solution To The Problem (1Kings 17:8-16; 2Chron. 25:7-13; 2Kings 4:1-7)
  - J. It is Not Possible In God’s Plan (Matt 26:39)
- II. Some Ways That God Says “No!”
  - A. He May Make A “Yes” Providentially Impossible (David)
  - B. He May Say “No!” Through The Bible (Deut. 24:1-4; Jer. 3:1)
  - C. Guiding us to stop praying (2 Cor. 12:8-9; 1Jn 5:15-17)
  - D. He May Remove Your Desire (James 4:3; Psalm 37:4; 140:8)
  - E. He May Give Your Heart’s Desire In A Different Way (Eph. 3:20)
- III. What Seems Like a “No!” May Actually Be A Yes (Matt 15:21-28)
- IV. Some Additional Lessons From The “No!” Passages Of Scripture (2 Sam. 12; Jer. 18:7-8; Rom. 8:26-28)
  - A. Until you clearly hear a “No” it is safe to persevere in prayers if they are grounded in the Scriptures (2Sam. 12:14-17; Jer. 18:7-8; Jonah)
  - B. When God says “No” learn to submit the way David and Job did (2Sam. 12:18-23)
  - C. Learn to be led by the Spirit in prayer (2Sam 12 with Psalm 51:11; Rom. 8:14-17,26-28)

### Conclusion