

*Grace*

When God Says No

By

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# Grace: When God Says No

## II Corinthians 12:1-10

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee:** for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

One of the first rules a salesman learns is just don't take No for the answer. When a customer says no, it is the goal of the salesman to find out just what the customer is saying. Is he saying No I don't like the product, No I don't like your sales approach, No I think it cost too much or No I have found something better, No I don't think I can afford it. What does the customer mean when he says No. When you can get to the heart of what the customer means when he says no, you can then work on overcoming his or her objections. And even if the final answer is still no, what you have learned will help you become a better salesman with the next customer. Well, sometimes God says No. I know that we don't consider our prayers to be sales pitches to God, but think about it. There are somethings that we want or think we need so bad that we get very specific in our prayers to God about them. We tell him why we want or need this or that. We tell what we will do for him if we get it. We even give him a time frame in which to work it out. Now tell me if that is not a sells pitch. And many times God will say yes. He fixes that which is broken, finds that which was lost, opens doors that were closed, heals those that are sick, and builds up those that were torn down. But every

now and then God will say **NO!** What does God mean when He says No? As we look at our text for today it will be our goal to better understand the role that Grace plays in our lives as well as gaining a better appreciation for what God means when He says NO!

Even the best people are subject to pride, God gave Paul a particular weakness to keep him humble. Paul nowhere specifies the cause of the torment, and this was probably done on purpose. This keeps us sensitive to our own pride and weaknesses. Paul specifies that this particular problem was a messenger of Satan, and that God allowed this torment. The design of this was to keep the apostle humble: *Lest he should be exalted above measure, [v. 7](#)*. Paul himself knew he *had not yet attained, neither was already perfect*; and yet he was in danger of being lifted up with pride. If God love us, he will hide pride from us, and keep us from being exalted above measure; and spiritual burdens are ordered, to cure spiritual pride. This thorn in the flesh is said to be a messenger of Satan, which he did not send with a good design, but on the contrary, with ill intentions, to discourage the apostle (who had been so highly favored of God) and hinder him in his work. But God designed this for

good, and he overruled it for good, and made this messenger of Satan to be so far from being a hindrance that it was a help to the apostle.

. 8 We often plead to God to remove pain from our lives, but if God does not remove the pain, then we must look to see how this can be used to glorify God. The apostle prayed earnestly to God for the removal of this sore grievance. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the flesh we should give ourselves to prayer. Therefore we are sometimes tempted that we may learn to pray. The apostle *besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him, [v. 8](#)*. Note, though afflictions are sent for our spiritual benefit, yet we may pray to God for the removal of them: we ought indeed to desire also that they may reach the end for which they are designed. The apostle prayed earnestly, and repeated his requests; he besought the Lord *thrice*, that is, often. So that if an answer be not given to the first prayer, nor to the second, we must hold on, and hold out, till we receive an answer. Christ himself prayed to his Father thrice. As troubles are sent to teach us to pray, so they are continued to teach us to continue instant in prayer

9. We often ask why bad things happen to good people. God does care about our pains, but our justification and life in Christ is far more important. Even as Christians, we suffer under the curse. This means we suffer pain and physical death. However, we have a great hope in Christ that the rest of the world does not have. Our weaknesses are important. If we are self-sufficient and comfortable, we do not seek God. However, when we recognize our weaknesses and need, we must turn to God who is the only one that can fulfill our needs. This is how God's power is perfected in weaknesses: weak vessels allow Him to work through them. Stubborn, proud, self-righteous, and strong-willed people are more difficult or impossible for God to use in a positive manner.

We have an account of the answer given to the apostle's prayer, that, although the trouble was not removed, yet an equivalent should be granted: *My grace is sufficient for thee*. Note, (1.) Though God accepts the prayer of faith, yet he does not always answer it in the letter; as he sometimes grants in wrath, so he sometimes denies in love. (2.) When God does not remove our troubles and temptations, yet, if he gives us grace sufficient for us, we have no reason to

complain, nor to say that he deals ill by us. It is a great comfort to us, whatever thorns in the flesh we are pained with, that God's grace is sufficient for us. Grace signifies two things: [1.] the good-will of God towards us, and this is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us, to support our souls and cheer up our spirits, in all afflictions and distresses. [2.] The good work of God in us, the grace we receive from the fullness that is in Christ our head; and from him there shall be communicated that which is suitable and seasonable, and sufficient for his members. Christ Jesus understands our case, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only strengthen us, but glorify *himself*. *His strength is made perfect in our weakness*. Thus his grace is manifested and magnified; he ordains his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

III. Here is the use which the apostle makes of this dispensation: *He gloried in his infirmities* ([v. 9](#)), and took pleasure in them, [v. 10](#). He does not mean his sinful infirmities (those we have reason to be ashamed of and grieved at), but he means his afflictions, his reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake, [v.](#)

10. And the reason of his glory and joy on account of these things was this--they were fair opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace resting upon him, by which he had so much experience of the strength of divine grace that he could say, *When I am weak, then am I strong*. This is a Christian paradox: when we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace.