

Ridin' High Cowboy Church

8771 FM 35

Union Valley/Royse City, TX

Pastor: Steve Bishop

**Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I
should go, for to you I lift up my soul.**

Psalm 143:8

Sunday, March 19, 2017

Accepting No as an Answer, when God is Uncooperative

Evaluating strengths and weaknesses...A horse named Crankshaft. He was a great heading horse (steer roping), but one day, he started stopping as soon as you roped a steer. My friend fought with him and he never could get him to get rid of this bad habit...in fact, it kept getting worse. I bought him and turned him into a calf horse, the best horse I've ever owned...a weakness became a great strength.

Sometimes we feel like God is not even paying attention and if we stay there long enough, we might doubt if God even exists.

God's cooperation in your life is not an argument for or against of his existence. But, if paying attention to us or cooperating is proof of existence, then around my house, I would have to say often to my "My kids don't exist," or Daph could say "My husband does not exist."

What about this one...maybe you were taught if you have enough faith, God will hear you, or there must be sin in your life, or if you would just give more... The Bible teaches otherwise because some of the most used people in the Bible had no faith at times, and some of them had great faith and yet God seemed distant to them at times.

Joshua 5

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

14 "Neither," (Hebrew word "lo" means NO) ***he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."*** ***The Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"*** Joshua understood there was something bigger going on than just swords and winning battles...

15 The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Paul went around telling people about Jesus. Paul spent 20 years of his life sitting on ships that went to hostile areas trying to spread Christianity. Right after Paul became a follower of Christ, he was afflicted with some type of problem with his body, he did what we would do...he began to pray for God to remove this.

God said 'no' to Paul's prayer. The man God used more than any other man, God said No in response to his prayer. God knew his name and even talked to Him, millions were named after him, he wrote half of the New Testament.

2Corinthians is a letter to a group of Christians, he wrote to explain how God worked to keep him humble because God had revealed so many great things to Paul and used him in a great way. He gives us some insight into how to respond when God says no.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 7 Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, (because of all the great visions God had given him and the words God has given him to say) ***I was given a thorn in my flesh*** (many people quote this and don't know it's from the Bible) ***a messenger of Satan*** (maybe a descriptive word like vacation from Hell) ***to torment me.*** (It limited his ability to do what he needed to do, even what God had called him to do – some ideas floating around malaria, epileptic seizures, poor eyesight – maybe every time he got up to speak, this bothered him, every time he got off a boat.

All the while God was using him in a great way to do the very important work, he was very successful.

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. Paul was only asking God to do for him what he saw God do for others and what God had even done through him for others. It does not mean he prayed once a day for three days and then said, "Ok, it's not gonna happen." This is reference to a season of prayer, maybe over the 20 years, maybe he even tried like us to bargain with God or manipulate God (promise things...like my granddad always said – keep something to give up – I'll never smoke, drink, etc. – think of the bargaining power the Apostle Paul had!

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, (God said to Paul, I'm not giving you what you're asking for, you're going to have to endure this for another season, (Grace in this context, is being able to put one foot in front of the other and keep going, to go to work one more day, to go home to the unknown on more afternoon...

Sufficient= more than enough

For my power is made perfect in weakness

But sometimes God says I want to get glory from you but I'm going to do it on the stage of your weakness. I'm so thankful we don't get to choose whether or not God gets glory from or strength or weaknesses because none of us would choose the weakness. But don't you grow the most from those who glorify God in the middle of extreme weakness.

Here is a heads up if weakness is in your future, here is an explanation of it's in your past, here is comfort if it's happening right now.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God is going to showcase his strength in your weakness, if you will accept NO for an answer...

After God says no to removing your weakness, he says yes to My grace is sufficient for You

1. You have permission to ask God to (remove your thorns) strengthen your weakness.....and he has permission to say no
2. God may choose to showcase his power through your weakness (it may never change) it may never work out, a person may never come back
3. You won't experience God's sustaining grace as long as you resist his will

Striving with God – we get mad and we shut God out, quit singing the songs, quit going to church, quit praying, quit reading the Bible, being around Christians is annoying, cause none of it makes sense in your current reality.

At this point we get bitter, you'll still be a Christian, but you won't benefit from the grace that comes when your weakness becomes a platform for God's Glory.

Sustaining grace begins with "not my will but thine" like what Jesus prayed in the garden

In the gap of what you want and what God has decided to do is sufficient sustaining empowering grace. But we will never experience it while resisting God in the areas of our weakness...

I don't say this with confidence because of a verse in the Bible, I've seen dozens of times in people's lives.

In the middle of extreme weakness, they experienced sufficient grace.

Sitting right here with you are dozens of people who live out God's grace in the middle of weaknesses.

I know your greatest weakness this morning, because it's mine too. As human beings, we were born with a hole in us that we try to fill with all kinds of things and it's a hole that only God can fill.

Today you can turn that weakness into a strength through what Jesus did in your place...