

In June 2010, a group of us were enjoying a potluck after services. My friend, 49 year old, Mickey Suttle, was there. But he was acting strangely and his speech was slurred. His wife took him to the hospital. We prayed he would be okay, but he wasn't. He was diagnosed with a brain tumor. We prayed it would be benign, but it was malignant. We prayed it was operable, but it was inoperable. We prayed his treatments would help; they didn't. We prayed that God would spare his life for the sake of his family, but less than 4 months after diagnosis, God said NO.

While it wasn't the first time I'd asked, it was a time I remember clearly thinking: **"Why does God say No?"** Have you ever asked that question? Sometimes things don't go the way they "should" and we ask God, "Why?"

I mean, we do serve the same God as Hannah did, right? She prayed for a child and God gave her a child. And the same God as Daniel? And God spared him in the lion's den. I'm not saying I am a righteous man, but many righteous men and women were praying for him. Elders were leading public prayers on his behalf. And if God would have said YES, even one time during those 4 months, he might be alive today. Why? **(James 5:14-16)**

It should be said, lest we start rallying behind this question, that the question itself, regardless of the answer, demonstrates *our immaturity*. I mean, the truth is, God says YES to us almost all the time!

In the case of Mickey and his family -- We prayed for his faith to hold, and his days with family to be loving. We prayed for him to have little pain and to pass in peace. We prayed for his love ones that they would bind together and find greater faith. We prayed that God's family would help and help a lot. God said "YES."

Even for us, for every NO God gives, he gives countless YESs. We ask him to *get us home safe, help a friend get better, or get me through a tough time*. We ask for guidance or peace, and the YESs pile up. No wise father says YES to his children every time. But He sure does say YES often, even daily.

However, that doesn't make this an irreverent or inappropriate question; because God does provide an answer. We have all had times when it seems like God could say YES so very easily and it would make perfect sense to you if He would, but He doesn't and we want to know why that is. That was my question concerning Mickey. This morning we will let Him answer that question for us. These answers will humble you dramatically but also increase your peace and your trust in the Great God of Heaven.

I certainly want to welcome our visitors here today to worship and express encouragement at the faithful members who are here during this hour. I pray our study will benefit us greatly and answer a question that trials and tribulation in your own life have frequently brought to mind.

I. His Knowing Grace - (II Corinthians 12:7-10) - (ability to know how favor on earth ought to be distributed)

Paul was a faithful and righteous person. And 3 times he made a request of God. He is a diligent prayer. Whatever the "thorn in the flesh" was, it burdened this man greatly and he knew God could help him. And all 3 times God said "NO." Didn't God love Him? Didn't God care about his anguish?

Well, in Paul's case, as with our own, we seem to know exactly how God's grace SHOULD be bestowed. And yet, we know nothing. He knows everything. He knows what is best now and later: what's needed.

V9 - "My grace is sufficient for you." That is, the unmerited favor I have already given you is enough. Who you are is exactly who I need you to be to do what I need you to do. Any more favor would impute that.

Man would say: first make me all better and I'll serve Christ. We know so little, our understanding limited. Don't we trust God's wisdom in distributing blessings on earth. It is not a blind dispersion, but each YES and each NO carries a purpose beyond our understanding, but for HIS PURPOSE.

Can I show you that true faith understands that God's Knowing Grace always answers correctly?

V7 - This is where I need to be physically to be humble and focused on Christ

V9 - I am not ashamed of God's answer against my desire, I trust His greater view.

V10 - I can use this limitation to show the world that as long as I have Christ, I have all!

Can you say the same about the pain and trials and challenges and grief in your life?

Mickey faced God's answers with HUMILITY, CONFIDENCE and CONTENTMENT and God was glorified! "I trust God knows more about what I need than I do, and for Jesus's sake, I willfully accept it."

II. His Spiritual Will - (*Matthew 26:36-39*) – (intentions with greater importance than physical peace)

The Father loves no one more than His only begotten Son. And it must have hurt to see Jesus, living in human flesh, subjected to all of the pain, agony, stress and grief of the human condition. And while I would not suggest Jesus wanted to in any way fall short of God's plan, He certainly was asking that this cup (of suffering), in this moment, pass FROM Him. Oh how the Father must have wanted to do exactly that. How can we comprehend God denying a relief to His beloved?

Well, it demonstrates that God's spiritual will for the spiritual benefit of mankind is more important than any physical provision, relief or change. Christ made the request in His physical anguish, but the Father answered with what was good for souls, for our true well-being.

Can I show you the attitude that prays in the flesh but trusts God's spiritual will always reigns?

V39 - "Not my will, but Thine be done." He only wanted what aligned with God's plan.

V42 - If it requires my grief, even torture and death to help souls... I am ready.

V46 - While not receiving, He left in confidence and resolve, that God's way would win out.

God did send help. He always sends help (*Luke 22:43* -an angel from heaven "strengthened Him"). But in this case, Jesus learned obedience through suffering, not relief, and it was well with His soul.

Sometimes God says YES and lightens our load, and sometimes not. But do we have the faith to accept that He is working spiritual growth and good in ways beyond our comprehension.

James 1:1-4 - That His spiritual will may be the produce of our suffering in His name?

In Mickey's case, his suffering perfected the faith of two men who had rejected the gospel for years. It was needed for God's spiritual will to persevere in them. I believe Mickey would do it all again for that result!

III. His Eternal View - (*Hebrews 11:32-38*) – (immensely more interested in heaven over earth)

11:32-35 - We love a good redemption story, where people pray to God and He grants life and provision. I mentioned in the intro about Hannah and Daniel, provided for and saved!

11:36-38 - But What About These People? Were they not praying for safety and life and deliverance and the well being of their family members? Sure, and yet God said no. Why?

Because God values the soul and eternity and heaven INFINITELY more than this short life on earth. And while we often attack all meaning to the here and now, God flippantly looks at life on this earth and says, "*men of whom the world was not worthy!*"

I know the pain must have been great in the dying and those who saw their loved ones perished. Did those people question why God said No? Maybe the living did, but not the dead. They knew.

Revelation 20:4-6 - When they were given eternal life and reigned in the glory of Jesus Christ! Life on earth was nothing compared to the eternity we are preparing for! Worth dying for.

Illustration - A single thread from the carpet. This is life on earth. We wish it to be longer or straighter or in some way better, so we observe it daily. But God sees the rest of the auditorium, the countless expanse that represents eternity. That's the whole picture; what He cares about.

Conclusion: As we wrap up our study, let's see all of our points working together in the life of one man. A few weeks ago, Ben taught on the Rich man and Lazarus, a story that Jesus told. And in the story, it sure seems like the rich man got a lot of YESes from God in this life, while clearly Lazarus was often told NO.

And yet, can we see, that God KNEW the answers Lazarus needed, to accomplish God's SPIRITUAL WILL for his life, so that above all else, he could enjoy the ETERNAL RICHES of heaven. For two thousand years, Lazarus has been enjoying the product of God's choices in his life.

And my friend, Mickey Suttle, is right there beside him doing the same.

Instead of demanding our way, or second guessing God's choices, perhaps we should thank God for unanswered prayers. Or better yet, for giving us the NO's we need to do His will and find our way home.

Because He loves you, He sometimes tells you NO, but we do not have that right with Him.

Because we love Him, we will trust Him and tell Him YES to every request. Is God making request of you?