

2Corinthians 12:1-10

Big Idea: When God says "No," hold on because His grace is accomplishing something His miracles do not.

Last Time

Last week we talked about those seasons when heaven seems silent. But today we will address something just as difficult... Q: What happens when God says "No"? We don't like no, especially when God has the power to change our situation.

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

Paul's apostleship and authority in the church was being challenged. He is defending himself. 2Corinthians 12 opens with Paul describing incredible spiritual experiences which authenticated his authority and message. God had allowed him to see things very few people ever would. Then, almost unexpectedly, Paul says something shocking. Paul suffered from some kind of chronic physical ailment. We don't know what it was, but we know from 1:8-9 that it started in Asia and went on for 14 years. Three times he asked God to remove the thorn. He was denied, but with an explanation.

1. Hold on when the answer is 'No' (vv.7-8)

The thorn served two purposes: it kept Paul humble and it kept him dependent. Neither was punishment. Both were grace. Q: Have you ever considered that God might be doing something greater than removing your pain? Some might measure God's love by His willingness to remove our suffering. Paul measured God's love by God's willingness to stay with him in it.

2. Hold on because grace is enough (v.9)

"My grace is sufficient for you." That isn't the answer Paul wanted. He wanted healing. God offered grace. He wanted deliverance. God offered strength. He wanted the thorn removed. God said, *"I'm going to give you something better. I'm going to give you my presence."* Q: Wouldn't it have been easier simply to remove the thorn? Absolutely. So why didn't He? Sometimes God is more interested in changing us than changing our circumstances.

3. Hold on because weakness is where God works (vv.9-10)

This is one of the greatest reversals in all of Scripture. Paul says, *"I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses..."* Who says that? Someone who has learned something we haven't. Weakness is not the enemy. Independence is. Some of us have spent years asking, *"God, why won't You take this away?"* Maybe a better question is, *"God... what are You producing in me through this?"* That doesn't make the pain good. It means God refuses to waste it.

Q: What if the greatest obstacle to your faith isn't that God hasn't answered your prayer? What if it's that you've already decided the only good answer God can give is "yes"?

Family Night – Read 2Corinthians 12:1-10

- **Elementary School** – Ask, "Why did God allow Paul to suffer (v.7)? How many times did Paul ask God to remove the problem? What did God give Paul to help him (v.9)?"
- **Middle/ High School** – Ask, "Why does God sometimes say 'No'? What can we learn and experience from God when the answer is 'No'? Why should we own our weaknesses? How does weakness make us strong?"

Prayer: "Father, help us own our weaknesses and seek contentment in order to experience Your grace. Amen."

Velocity (Middle and High School Students)

Velocity: This Wednesday, August 12 at 6:30.

Gravity: Gravity will resume September 6th.

Today's Songs

Praise You Anywhere.....Brandon Lake

Praise Medley.....Tauren Wells

Great Things.....Phil Wickham

Hold On

New Series Part 3 today. We have good reason to "hold on" even when it appears God is absent from our circumstances.

Back to School Bash

KidsJAM kids are invited on August 19th to the church for indoor and outdoor games from 6-7pm. Sign up in KidsJAM.

Small Group Leadership Training

Training is Saturday, September 19. If you are interested in leading a small group, we can teach you how.

GCC 101

Membership Class is September 13 after the 11:00 service. Childcare is provided and a light lunch will be served. Please sign up at the Welcome Desk.