

Moses' Prayer Request Denied

Israel's Trials and Wanderings

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Bible Text: Deuteronomy, 3:23-26

Preached on: Sunday, February 16, 2014

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The Scripture reading this afternoon is found in Numbers 27. We read the entire chapter. Our text is found in a related passage in Deuteronomy. Numbers 27, beginning at verse 1,

“1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. 4 Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. 5 And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.

“6 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 7 The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. 8 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. 9 And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. 10 And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. 11 And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.

“12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. 13 And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as

Aaron thy brother was gathered. 14 For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

“15 And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, 16 Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17 Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

“18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; 19 And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. 20 And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. 22 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: 23 And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.”

That's as far as we read in God's holy and inspired word. May God bless that word to our hearts.

This text that we consider this afternoon is found in Deuteronomy 3, verses 23-26.

“23 And I besought the LORD at that time, saying, 24 O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? 25 I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. 26 But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.”

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, has God ever said “no” to one of your prayers? Have you ever prayed for something that you believed in your heart was a legitimate request, something that was good and proper and yet God denied that request? All of us, no doubt, have experienced what we call unanswered prayer and, of course, the fact of the matter is, in actual fact it is not unanswered prayer but God has answered that prayer in a different way than what we would have liked and yet did answer it. When he

answers us in his wisdom, according to his ways which are higher than our ways, sometimes those answers are difficult to take for us, difficult for us to handle.

The text that we consider this afternoon is a lesson in what we should pray for and also how we should react when God says “no.” This is not, of course then, an interesting story about Moses but as with the rest of the history of Israel in the wilderness, this has been written for our admonition. These things are written for our benefit. The lessons that the church in the Old Testament learned are the lessons that we have to learn also in the New Testament church.

The text brings us to the end of Moses' life on earth. Moses, the servant of God, who was a picture of the Mediator, Jesus Christ and yet we see even in this request, Moses praying and God denying his request, Moses falls short of the true Mediator for when Jesus Christ prays for us, when he prays, God answers. God always answers Christ's prayers. Yet, what an amazing life Moses had. Think all of that Moses went through: taken from the bulrushes in the river, taken into the house of Pharaoh's daughter, raised in the best schools of Egypt and yet when Moses came to be of age, he thought it better to be with God's people than to be in Pharaoh's house. And so he set out wrongly, of course, at first, set out in his own strength seeking to deliver his own people, seeking to deliver Israel in his own strength and then killing the Egyptian, Moses had to flee to Midian. There God continued to prepare Moses so that one day he could lead Israel out of Egypt and that day came when Moses was some 80 years old. God sent Moses back to Egypt to lead his people out of bondage. There, again, we see the picture of the Mediator, Jesus Christ, who leads us out of bondage. God, through Moses, sent the ten plagues. God, through Moses, caused the Red Sea to part and for his people to pass through on dry ground. God, through Moses, provided water from the rock in the desert. And God, through Moses, gave them the law at Mount Sinai.

What a career Moses led. If we did half of what Moses did in his life, we would be amazed. But now God was telling Moses that his career was over and Moses, no doubt, had a difficult time with that. We sometimes have difficult times when God signals some great change in our lives. Moses was human just like we are and he would have had a difficult time with that news as God told him to appoint Joshua as his successor. Think of Moses' longing. After he had rejected Pharaoh's house, after he longed his whole life to see Israel brought into the Promised Land and now they are right on the border of Canaan and God says, “No, you will not cross over.” Think of how hard that must have been for Moses.

So, Moses prayed that God would let him pass over the Jordan and go into that good land. He had longed for it all his life and it seems like a perfectly good request. What could be wrong with Moses desiring to cross over into the Promised Land? And yet God denied it. God denied Moses' request. Let's consider that this afternoon: Moses' prayer request denied. Let's note” the earnest prayer, what Moses asked for in the first place; the difficult answer that God gave to him; and lastly, the sufficient grace that God always gives to his people. Moses' prayer request denied: the earnest prayer, the difficult answer and the sufficient grace.

There is no question that Moses had a proper and earnest desire to go into the Promised Land. He had been through so much with God's people, Israel, leading them out of Egypt through the Red Sea; fighting against Amalek, holding up his rod in the desert as Israel fought against Amalek; leading Israel to conquer those mighty kings, Og of Bashan and Sihon, the king of the Amorites. Moses, who prayed for God's people when God had threatened to destroy them multiple times. Moses who had endured the reproach of God's people, who had endured their complaining and so many other things that Moses had gone through in order to bring Israel to the border of Canaan. Now we might think that after all that, didn't Moses deserve even to go into the land of Canaan? Might not God crown his whole journey with letting him go into the land of Canaan?

But that's not the approach that Moses took to his prayer. That's sometimes the approach we take in our prayers. We think when we pray to God, "Lord, after all that I have done, after all that I have given, is this what you have given to me? Is this what I deserve?" And we think to ourselves that because of our faithfulness, we somehow deserve God's favor or when God gives us a difficulty, we think to ourselves, "I don't deserve this difficulty. After all that I have done, I deserve better than that." That's often the attitude that we have in our prayers. But as soon as we begin to think that way, "I deserve better. Why does God send me this trial? I deserve better than that." As soon as we begin thinking that way, what that's doing is shifting the emphasis on our merits. We're thinking now of our merits, "I deserve," and we're taking our emphasis off of Christ. We are taking our faith off of Christ and off of his merits. That's the only reason we deserve God's grace is because of Christ and because of his merits. We need to repent of that kind of attitude in our prayers.

But Moses doesn't show that attitude. Moses doesn't say to God, "Look at everything I have done for you. Look at all that I have done for thy people." Moses doesn't say that. He doesn't say, "I deserve better than this." What does he say? "I besought the Lord." Now, that doesn't come through in the English but in the original Hebrew, I besought the Lord, "besought" actually is a Hebrew word that comes from the very same word that our word "grace" comes from or from where the Hebrew word "grace" comes from. So, what Moses is saying, "I sought after thy grace. I sought after God's grace and compassion. I sought after it on multiple occasions." That idea is suggested, at least, by the verb that's used in the Hebrew original. "I sought after God's grace and compassion multiple times." Not, "I deserve something," but as someone who is needy, seeking God's undeserved favor.

Is that the way we pray to God, beloved? Do you pray to God that way? Seeking his favor as undeserving people in ourselves? Or do we demand that God would do it our way, "This is the way I want it. I don't want it another way. This is what I want." That's often our attitude in our prayers. We need to repent of that attitude that our way is better. How foolish. How foolish for us to think, "My way is better than God's way," and we've all thought that at one time or another. When God sends something difficult, something we don't like, we've all thought that. "My way has to be better than God's way." That's what our flesh says. Moses' example is: when we pray, pray as those who don't deserve a

thing in ourselves; pray for God's grace and compassion in Jesus Christ. That's Moses' example: pray as needy saints for God's undeserved favor.

Moses' actual request is found in verse 25. He says, Deuteronomy 3:25, "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." Let me go over and see that good land. What was Moses actually asking for? That goodly mountain? If we go back to Exodus when Moses crossed the Red Sea with the children of Israel with him, Exodus 17, Moses' sings a song and in that song he talks about that mountain. Exodus 15:17, part of Moses' song, he said, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them," that is, Israel, God would bring them in "and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." The mountain of thine inheritance, "in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established."

"Let me go over and see that good land and that goodly mountain and Lebanon." Lebanon, of course, stands in contrast to the desert. Lebanon is that lush forest. Lebanon is the place where the timber was collected for the house of God, for the tabernacle, for the temple that Solomon would build. Lebanon would bring the lumber for the house of God to be built. On that goodly mountain in that good land, the land of God's inheritance. The place where God dwells. That's where Moses wanted to go, where God dwells. Moses didn't want to be left out of that. He wanted to go to the place where God dwelt among his people in the temple. And how could God dwell among his people in the temple, how could God dwell there other than through the sacrifice of the lamb of God? Once a year, the priest could go into the Holy of Holies, the picture of God's presence. He go into God's presence but not before he had offered a sacrifice, not before he had sprinkled the blood. You see, God could only dwell with his people if the sacrifice had been made. That's a picture, is it not, of Jesus Christ? A picture that we are only able to fellowship with God if his blood has been poured out and sprinkled for us. But that's where Moses wanted to be, the place of God's presence.

Now, the question we can ask ourselves, beloved, is: do we long to be where God dwells? Do you long to be where God dwells? Do I long to be there? Do we rejoice at the privilege of coming into God's presence even this afternoon? Jesus says, "Where two or three are gathered, there am I in their midst." This is the place of God's presence. God gathers with his people. He speaks to his people. We pray to him and sing praises to him. Do you long to be in God's presence? Do I long to be in God's presence? Do we desire to sing his praises in the church with God's people? Is our life centered around the church? Or is it just something for the Lord's day? We come to church twice and that's it? Then we have nothing else to do with the church? Do we long to be with God's people and in God's presence?

Sadly, by nature, we don't. We set our hearts on the wilderness of this world. Far too often we are totally distracted by the things of this world. We become engrossed in the things of this world and we set them up as something higher than God himself in our hearts because we desire them so fervently. We long for the things of this world and, of course, when we do that, when we long for the wilderness, that takes away from our

longing for the Promised Land. They go in opposite directions. If Moses had wanted to stay in the wilderness, that would be the opposite of wanting to go into the Promised Land. We think this or that activity is more important than enjoying the blessings of God's covenant. That's an example for us: Moses' desire. Moses made that desire because he wanted to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. That's why he prayed what he prayed and it was a good request. In and of itself, it was a good request.

Not only was it a good request, Moses made it with a good motive. Why did Moses pray this prayer? He tells us in verse 24, Deuteronomy 3:24, "O Lord, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?" He says that before he asks to enter into the land of Canaan. "Thou hast begun to show thy servant," and the idea is Moses wants God to continue to show him his mighty works. Moses wants God to show him his greatness and his power so that Moses can continue to glorify God. That was his motive. Moses wanted to enter into the Promised Land so that he could see God's mighty works performed there too, so that he could glorify the God of heaven and earth.

It was a good request with a good motive. We ought to pray that way. When we pray, we ought to pray for good things and we ought to have a good motive. We ought to desire those things that are good in and of themselves and we ought to desire them because we want God to be glorified. That's the first petition in the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." That ought to be our primary motive, that God would glorify his name in the manifestation of his power and greatness. I tell you, they ought to but how often do our prayers fall short of that ideal? We pray, perhaps, for good things but with the wrong motive. We can pray for good things and yet have the wrong motive. I might pray for a good job; I might pray for health and strength; I might pray for a marriage partner. I might pray for any number of things that are good in and of themselves but what is my motive? And if all I'm thinking when I pray for a particular thing, if all I'm thinking is, "I want this for myself because this is going to make my life easy," then we focus only on the benefit, only on what it means for ourselves and we forget about God's glory so then we have the wrong motive. It's a selfish motive. We can pray for good things and yet have the wrong motive.

On the other hand, we might pray for wrong things, maybe this is not so common, but we might pray for wrong things and yet have a good motive. Someone might pray, "Lord, help we to win the lottery so that I can take all the money and give it to the church," and maybe they are even sincere in that thought. The motive might be good and yet it's praying for the wrong thing. God does not want us to tempt him that way. God doesn't want us to abuse his providence that way, claiming the lottery, throwing our money away that way. A good motive but a wrong request.

Or worse, a wrong request and a wrong motive. Asking for the wrong things and for the absolute wrong reason. We do that too. We have much to repent of in our prayers when we think about our prayers. How selfish our prayers are. "Give me this. Give me that. Give me this," and are we thinking about God's glory when we pray for those things? I

have to catch myself often. I think, “How selfish is that prayer. I’m just praying for this, this, this,” a laundry list of items. “Give me these things,” and I’m forgetting about the glory of God. We’re like little children in our prayers. We need to learn how to pray. “Lord, teach us to pray.” That should be the beginning of our prayers, “Teach us how to pray.”

Here's a good example that Moses gives us, asking for a good thing with a good reason, a good motive and yet, here's the striking thing, beloved, about this text, Moses asks for something that is good in and of itself, he expresses his desire that God would be glorified in the granting of this request, he has a right motive and God says “no.” God says “no.” On previous occasions, Moses had prayed as the mediator, the picture of Jesus Christ, the Mediator. Over and over again, Moses had prayed and God answered his prayer. On the occasion, for example, of the Golden Calf, Israel had sinned horribly but Moses prayed for God's people and he prayed for Aaron and God didn't destroy the people. God answered Moses' request. When Israel despised the manna that God had given to them, Moses prayed for them and God's anger was quenched. When Israel refused to go into the land of Canaan, Moses prayed for them 40 days and 40 nights and God heard Moses' prayer and spared the people again. When God sent serpents to bite the Israelites, Moses prayed and God answered his prayer, he sent a remedy. But not this time. Not this time. God refused to grant his request.

Here, again, we see there is a difference: Moses is just a picture of the Mediator, he's just the picture of Christ. But when Jesus Christ prays for something, when he prayed for something either for himself or for his people, God always answers Christ's prayers. Moses was a picture but we need something better than the picture. We need a Mediator whose prayers are always answered. This prayer, God did not grant Moses what he requested.

Deuteronomy 3:26, Moses says, “But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me.” God was, as it were, alienated from Moses. No matter how often Moses had prayed, God refused to grant his request. Then the second half of the verse, “And the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.” Like parents, we sometimes say to our children, “Don't ask again.” Don't ask again. That's what God was saying to Moses, “Don't ask me again.” Striking. Striking answer to Moses' request.

What we have to realize, however, is that God had a good reason. God had a good reason for denying Moses' request. The history of that goes back to the time when Israel had left Mount Sinai and Israel complained to God because of the lack of water and this was not the first time that they had complained about the lack of water and God told Moses, “Go and speak to the rock.” Moses was so upset with the Israelites, he lost his temper. It's amazing he didn't lose his temper before that but instead of seeing them as God's people, Moses losing his temper says, “Hear now ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock?” And he called them “rebels.” God's people. Moses and Aaron, too, did not sanctify God in Israel's eyes. God told them as a result, because they had not displayed God's mercy and his long-suffering and his goodness to Israel, God says, “You will not

lead Israel into the land of Canaan. You have not shown yourselves as perfect mediators.” One time Moses lost his temper. One time and God said, “You're not a fit mediator.”

That's striking because what that says is when we think about the Mediator, Jesus Christ, he never turns towards us in wrath. Yes, he chastises us when we sin but it's always in love. That's striking. Moses, one time, lost his temper with God's people and God said, “You're not fit to lead Israel into the Promised Land.” But Christ never. So, God directed Moses to ordain Joshua in his place. Joshua, another picture of Jesus. He must lead Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua, in fact, is the very name “Jesus” in the Old Testament. It's the Hebrew form of the name “Jesus.” He must lead Israel because Moses was not fit.

But that doesn't take away the harshness of it, the reality for Moses of it. Yes, God had forgiven Moses for his outburst and yet he was still chastizing Moses. The results of Moses' sin was still being felt by Moses and so that meant God denying Moses' request meant, that Moses could not enter the Promised Land. Not only that, it meant that just a few weeks and if you go back to the original account, there is only a few weeks between this account and when they actually entered into Canaan. That meant in a few weeks Moses was going to die. The news that he could not enter Canaan was God telling Moses, “You're going to die.” That's not easy to take. That's not easy for anybody to take. To find out that we have only weeks to live? On top of that, Moses could not go into the Promised Land.

God says “no” to our prayers, too. Not all our prayers but often. God says “no” when we pray for the wrong things with the wrong motives and we can understand that. Alright, I prayed for the wrong thing, I had the wrong motive but what about when we pray for something that is, we think, good and proper? And what about when we have a good motive, at least we think we do? Have we ever experienced that? We pray for strength to overcome a bad habit or a character flaw. Who could say that's a bad request? To overcome a character flaw? Or a bad habit? We pray that God would remove a trial from our lives. We pray for unity in the church or for unity in our family. We pray for peace in our marriage. We might pray that God would work a work of grace in the hearts of our children. That's a good request. We might pray that God would heal us from injury or illness. We might even pray for the life of our spouse, that God would preserve a spouse, a dear loved one and yet God sometimes answers “no” to those seemingly good requests. Sometimes the answer is so difficult that we have to put our hand over our mouth and adore the majesty of God and stand speechless before him because his ways are above our ways. Why didn't God grant this request? “It was a good request and I wanted him to be glorified in it and he still didn't grant it.”

This example of Moses, beloved, urges us to take a proper approach and a proper attitude when God answers “no” to our requests. Don't expect that God will always or even often, don't expect that he will do things the way we want them to be done or the way we think they ought to be done. Then we have to deal with our old man because our old man never likes the way God does things. Our old man is going to complain against God to one degree or another when God does things the way we don't think they ought to be done. Don't we need grace then? We need grace that we would respond in the right way, that

we would learn contentment with God's answer. God makes his answer plain, "This is what I have ordained for you right now." O, that God would give us grace to accept that, to be content, to say, "If this is what God wants, then yes I do want it that way," but our flesh doesn't want it that way. There is that battle that goes on back and forth. But this is what God wants, "But I don't want it that way," but this is God's way. This is the way of wisdom. This is the way of love that he has ordained and who am I to say, then, that I don't want it that way? There's the battle. The flesh against the spirit.

The Apostle Paul had to learn contentment. The same thing, he had a thorn in his flesh. He prayed three times that God would remove that thorn in the flesh and three times God said "no." God worked through that process. The apostle learned contentment. God gave him grace. Jesus, himself, didn't relish the thought of suffering. When he was in the Garden, he didn't look forward to the suffering that God had ordained for him. That brought great torment to him so that he prayed but what did he pray? "Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done." That's what we have to learn, beloved, to pray that, "Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done."

Jesus Christ perfectly submitted himself to God's will so much so that he went to the cross and died in obedience because that was the way that God had ordained for him. Of course, we know the benefit. We know that that difficult way for Christ was for the good of him and for his church because by that sacrifice, he earned all the riches of all the blessings that are in store for us. Would we not want him to go that way if we had the choice again? If he had the choice? Of course we would want him to go God's way. God would have us learn that. God would have us learn contentment, to submit ourselves to his will completely, to say, "This is what God has ordained for my life. Right now. This is what God has ordained. It is clear," and then to be content with that especially in difficult times.

We need to trust God even though he puts us into painful situations. Although God said "no" to Moses, that didn't mean, of course, that God removed his grace. God didn't remove his grace when God denied that request. God wasn't saying, "Well, now you're not going to receive my grace anymore." Just the opposite, God's grace continued. But God says to Moses, "Let it suffice thee. Let it suffice thee." In other words, "What I have given you is enough. What I have given you is enough." That is, "My grace is sufficient. My grace is sufficient for you." That was the end of the matter. God would not allow Moses to bring it up again. What did God tell Moses to do? "Go to the top of Mount Pisgah and look over the whole land of Israel, north, south, west. Look over all of the land."

Now, we might think, "Was God trying to be cruel to Moses? To show him all this land and then say, But you're not going there?" We might be tempted to conclude that but now step back a bit and ask this question: what did Moses actually ask for? And did God really say "no" to Moses? Did God really say "no." Well, Moses thought so. Moses thought he said "no." After all, God did not let Moses cross over the Jordan. God did not let him into the land of Canaan. But what had Moses asked for? Deuteronomy 3:25, "I

pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.”

Then Moses, following God's command, he ordained Joshua to take his place. He went to the top of the mountain and he saw all of the land and he died. He was buried. Nobody knew where he was buried. Did God say “no” to Moses? If you think about it, God actually said “yes” to Moses. He actually said, not in those words, but he said “yes” to Moses. “Moses, you want to go into the good land? You want to go to that goodly mountain? You want to go where I am present? Then, Moses, have a look at this physical land but then take your eyes off of that earthly picture. I'm going to show you the reality. I'm going to bring you to a better country that is an heavenly country. That's where I'm bringing you. Moses, I'm not going to put you through all the pain and the trials.” Think about it: if Moses had gone over into the land of Canaan, he would have had to continue to deal with all the strife and all the troubles that plagued Israel when they crossed over. God says, “I'm not going to put you through all that. All the pain of going into the earthly kingdom, to see the difficulties that God's people have yet to face. I'm bringing you to the heavenly kingdom. A place far better than you ever imagined and, no, Moses, you are not worthy in yourself to cross over into the heavenly kingdom but I'm bringing you there anyway.”

If Moses had known how much better God's answer was than the answer he wanted, would he have said, “I still want to cross over into the land of Canaan”? Well, his flesh would have wanted to go to the physical land but by God's grace, he would have said, “No, I want to go into the heavenly kingdom. I don't want to go to that earthly place. Bring me to the heavenly kingdom.”

But there is a lesson in that, beloved, for our prayers. When we ask for something and God doesn't give us specifically what we ask for, we ask for something in Jesus' name, if he doesn't give us what we asked for, it's because there is always something better. Always. Not just most of the time. If God doesn't give us what we ask for, it's because there's something better in store for us. If God wants us to wait for something, maybe he gives it to us later, that's because waiting would be better for us. He always has something better than what we ask for if he doesn't give us what we ask for. Think of Moses: Moses wanted this earthly piece of real estate; he wanted to walk over this physical land. God said, “I have something better for you. Far, far better.” But that's also the case with our requests. God sends difficulties and trials. We pray, “Remove this trial from me.” God says, “No, I have something better for you because I'm going to work through that trial to bring you closer to me.” And God's people testify about that. You talk to people who have been through difficult trials and they will say, “I would never have chosen that way for myself. I would never have gone through that and I probably wouldn't even choose it today but when I went through that, God brought me closer to him.”

That's what God's people testify. God always has something better for us if he denies our request. Now, he may give us exactly what we requested. If we asked for something good with a good motive, he gives it to us. He gives us the good blessings that we ask for but if

he denies it, it's because he has a better thing for us. He sends suffering in order to sanctify us in order to take our eyes off of the things of this world. We become so fixated on this world and we think that this is it, this is what we are to live for and then he makes us weaker as we get older and we see that really this world isn't all that it's made out to be because he has something better.

When the Apostle Paul prayed for God to remove the thorn in his flesh, God gave him something better. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, "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. 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." Because his strength in his weakness is in Christ. That was better for Paul.

Moses prayed that God would bring him into the Promised Land. You know, the wicked will never pray that prayer. They won't desire that earnestly. They might say the words but they will never earnestly desire to enter into the heavenly Canaan, into God's presence because they don't care for God and they don't care about fellowship with God. What they want is to live their life for themselves. Sadly, God will give them that. God will give them that. He will leave them to themselves. On the Judgment Day, they will be left by themselves. They will be cast out of God's presence into the torments of hell. But God's people, when we pray, "Lord, give us that inheritance. Give us the experience. Cause us to experience that joy and fellowship with thee." God always gives the answer of grace.

As their prayers go up to him, he gives us grace in the first place to desire those things and as we pray for those things, he gives us more grace. He gives us grace upon grace. Though we are certain to face disappointing answers to our prayers, we will always be able to say, "God truly brought me the best way." Maybe we don't see it now but when we arrive in glory, we will be able to look back and we will be able to say, "God brought me the best way. He chose that way so that I would be humbled. So that I would quit relying on myself. He chose that way so I would look to Christ for all of my salvation. God chose that way for me because he loves me. He chose that way so that his name would be magnified."

Beloved, that's God's word of grace to us today. In Christ Jesus, though he often says "no" to our requests, it's because he has something better for us in Christ because he has already said "yes" to that better way. That's why he says "no." That's the example. These things were written for our admonition. Believe it, beloved, this is the truth of God's word. Amen.

Our Father which art in heaven, we thank thee for thy abounding goodness towards us. Grant us, we pray, that we may see it, that we may know that thou art looking upon us in favor because of Jesus Christ and that thou art giving to us that which truly is good. Forgive us when we have doubted, when we have wanted our own way. May we trust that thy way truly is best. We ask it now in Jesus' name. Amen.