

# Prayer Mysteries

by Charles Anderson

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*The mystery of prayer is that we can talk and have conversation with Almighty God in just a moment of time, but it's a discipline that requires humility, faith, and trust in His sovereignty.*

**Duration:** 49:50

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 7:16, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 55:8-9, Matthew 6:33, Acts 16:6, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

**Topics:** "Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of being invited to a wealthy family's home for dinner. The family had four wild and energetic boys. During the meal, one of the boys approached the speaker and asked about the Bible. This encounter led the speaker to reflect on the importance of the Holy Bible and the need for it to be illustrated and understood. The sermon then takes a turn as the speaker recounts the tragic accident that took the lives of three of the boys, leaving only one hanging onto life. The speaker expresses the difficulty of being a preacher in such moments and shares a story about a simple man named Billy who found solace in prayer despite his illiteracy.

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## Transcript

There's a great mystery about this exercise in which all of us indulge, and which we call prayer. I just tonight to be an expert on the matter of prayer, and with a great deal of chagrin and shame confess that I don't feel that I am a great man of prayer. I admire and stand in awe of some Christian people I have met in my life whom I felt knew how to reach God more directly, and perhaps more effectively than anybody else, and I've been great admirers of those whom we call experts in prayer, and who know how to pray.

Have you ever stopped to think of how remarkable is this exercise, however? I fear that we take for granted this high and holy privilege, and take it entirely too lightly. We can be in a gathering of people, we can be laughing and sometimes joking, or we can be talking about some light subjects that are somewhat inconsequential, and suddenly somebody says, so why don't we have prayer? And, in a split second, the whole atmosphere is changed, and we presume to address the Almighty Creator God of this universe, and fully believe that he has an attentive ear bent in our direction. And, we can shift gears in our conversation from almost nothing of importance to something of great importance.

I say to you, there's a great mystery about prayer. Every Christian either has, or should sometime in his life, read two great books. They're old books on prayer.

Murray's book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, and E. M. Bound's *The Power of Prayer*, and both of these will expand your horizon, your thinking about this exercise of prayer. I still say it's a tremendous mystery, is this matter of prayer, that we can talk and have conversation with Almighty God in just a moment of time. We may not know very much about how to do it.

We may fumble a little bit, like Billy over there in one of those little villages in mid-England. He was not too bright, you know, but in fact he was illiterate too. He didn't know how to read.

He'd never been to school at all, but he had found the Lord, and he'd learned a few simple secrets, thoughts about prayer, and he did his best. One day, he was sitting by a stone wall in the heat of the day, there in the shade, and he had climbed over the wall to get away from the roadside. There he sat, and he was saying, A-B-C-D-R-L-S-T-A-B-C-D-N-R-Q-S, and somebody walked by, heard that voice, looked over the wall, and saw Billy sitting there trying to recite the alphabet, and he said, What are you doing, Billy? Recognizing it, he says, I'm praying.

He said, That's no way to pray. He said, You aren't even saying sensible words, and Billy said, No, I don't know them words. I don't even know how to spell them, but I'm sure he can untangle the whole thing.

He knows what I'm thinking, and what I'm saying. Well, that's true. I suppose we come with our puerile, sometimes childish language that must make angels blush a little bit when they hear how we talk to God, and yet God knows how to unscramble and put back together again the petition that we desire of him.

Now, I say that there are some things that we know about prayer, and there are some things that elude us. We wish we knew more. For instance, when we study the Bible on this subject, we have great statements like the one in 1 John 5, 14 and 15, which says, and this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we add anything according to his will, he heareth us.

And, if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of him. That's a tremendous statement about prayer. The only thing is, it's not the only statement in the Bible about prayer, and we have no right to merely select a verse, lift it out of its context, and say, here is the whole content of the subject of prayer.

We must put it back together again with other statements that are made in the Bible about this subject before we can speak with any degree of authority about the exercise of prayer. We know also, James tells us, that we have not because we ask not. That may be prayerlessness.

It's why we have barrenness in our Christian life and experience, and don't get things from God. James also declares that it's the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man that avails much. And, nothing is to me more astonishing, and I admit every time I read it I stand back from it.

I know there's explanation for it. I know the exegetes of the Bible. I know that the students of the scriptures can have all of their niceties of explanation, but here I hear my Savior say, whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do.

That my father, that he father, may be glorified in the sun. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. There it is.

Does he mean that, and does it work? Well, hold on for just a moment or two. Careful study of these and other passages of scripture on prayer, I think, preclude the concept that we may expect to get anything we

want from God anytime we want it. To make such a declaration is, I think, to fly in the face of the simple teaching of the scriptures otherwise.

We soon learn something about prayer in our Christian life. We soon learn that there is a discipline attached to the exercise of prayer. God sometimes delays his responses to our petition, despite our bold affirmations of faith, despite our simple claiming such great promises as I just cited and others like that, that God sometimes even denies our requests.

You know it's possible, of course, to ask amiss. James, again, speaks on this subject, and he says that it is possible to ask for something out of place, that is unbecoming, not befitting, in order that we might consume it on our own lusts. We often are like the little girl who, as she crawled under the covers one winter night, was heard by her mother to say, and dear Lord, send a lot of snow so that it'll keep all the pretty flowers warm.

Amen, and then she snickered and said, I fooled him. I want a lot of snow so I can use my sled tomorrow morning. Well, I guess that's asking amiss that you may consume it on your own lusts and desires.

Now, one of the perplexing problems, and it is with us all the time, is that when our requests are legitimate and seemingly in order, yet there are times when God distinctly says no. There is a discipline to divine denial. There are times when God distinctly says no to what we ask, and it takes a great deal of spiritual maturity to recognize this, understand it, and accept it without rebellion, without question.

Let me cite a couple of instances tonight to illustrate this simple declaration that I've just made, that there is a discipline to divine denial, and that God sometimes says no. No matter how fervently we pray, no matter how many of us pray together, there are times when God in his wise providence says no. What is to be our reaction when he does that? Well, first of all, sometimes God denies our purposes in his service.

Would you turn to the book of Acts, the familiar chapter 16? And, in this particular chapter, you find the Apostle Paul eager to be on the move to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus. He now comes to a place, we read in Acts 16, 6, when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia. They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

Now, stop for a moment to say this. Do you think we're fair in assuming that Paul and his companions were praying all the while about their service and where they should serve the Lord? I would think we're safe in making such an assumption. They were asking for God's guidance and wisdom and leadership, and so they were moving into an area where they thought the gospel was needed, and suddenly they find that there's a blockage.

They're forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. Now, probably Paul had in his vision and in his heart all of Asia that needed the gospel, and he wanted desperately to preach it there, but suddenly he's blocked. I don't know how the Holy Spirit forbade that.

I really don't know. The word doesn't even hint as to how the Holy Spirit did this, what method he used, but nonetheless they were aware of the fact that there was a blockage that was of God. So, they came to Mysia and they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not, forbade them again, didn't allow it, and Paul suddenly finds that in his plans of service for God, he's a block of thwarted man.

Then, they pass by Mysia. They came down to Troas, and in Troas, a vision appeared to Paul in the night. You're all familiar with a story of the man of Macedonia who stood there beckoning them to come across

the sea and to serve God now in Europe.

Europe wasn't in Paul's vision, likely. Asia was. It was his hope and plan to be able to preach the gospel in Asia, but this man of God needed this discipline.

The work of God needed this checking. Paul planned to go to Asia, but God had another plan. He wanted to open up Europe.

You see, God had a grand strategy. He wanted to reach the whole cultural center of the world that day with the gospel. Much later on, when Paul lay in a Roman dungeon and reviewed what God had done in his life, he must have thanked God over and over again for the way in which God had led and even blocked his plans.

When he thought of what had happened down at Philippi, when he recalled the Thessalonians and their response to the scriptures, when he thought of that great conflict that happened, and then later on at Corinth, and then even here in Rome. And, because he was so human, Paul might have misinterpreted this divine denial and felt that God had pushed him into a corner. He may have asked the question over and over again, why has God done this for me? I had planned my life, I had planned my service, and then God blocked it.

But, Paul learned that the narrowing was for the enlargement of his life. Over the years, I have met some Christian people who have said, you know, 25-30 years ago and more, God spoke to me about giving my life for service for him beyond our shores. But, I was blocked.

I've always carried in my heart a desire to serve the Lord in some capacity with all of my life, with all of my time, with all of my energy. Why has God blocked me and not allowed it in my life? Well, I don't know all the answers, but I know this, that God's best for us may even be the denial of our requests to serve him. He has a purpose, his own plan and purpose.

Some years ago, we were ministering the word in the central part of our country, and after the morning service, we were invited to a home for dinner, and the minute we got there, we discovered that this was a home of some affluence, and they had four boys that made us kind of, we had a point of contact because we have four boys. But, I'll tell you, these boys were different boys than any I'd ever met. They were wildly stouted.

The lady had a buffet luncheon prepared. When she called for us to come and eat, I thought all of a sudden that the Iroquois Indian tribe had been let loose in that dining room. Had I not stepped back in a hurry, I should have had a sprained ankle.

Those kids came roaring through. Mama had to shout, hold it, we got company. Well, that made us very popular with those kids.

So, anyhow, we got our food, and we sat down, and I sat next to the oldest boy. He was then about maybe 16 or so, and I said to him, I didn't get your name. What's your name? He was shoveling it in, you know, and he was saying, and I said, what'd you say? Well, there's something wrong with my hearing.

I won't try that again. So, the next approach, I wanted to talk to this boy. I said, are you in school yet? And I said, I didn't get that.

What year are you in? And all of a sudden, it dawned on me, I said to myself, this guy looks fastidious. There's something wrong with him, and I backed off. The real truth was he didn't want to talk to me or anybody else.

He was just a rude, crude, miserable, bratty kid. I wish I could think of a few more legitimate adjectives. I would thrust them all into the sentence all at once, and all his brothers were the same.

It was a miserable meal. The parents were trying desperately hard to pretend there was nothing wrong. We tried just as hard to believe there was nothing wrong, and both of us knew there was a lot wrong.

These kids were undisciplined brats. I learned only the Sunday before the pastor had to ask two of them to leave the service because they were misbehaving. This is a very prominent family in a very fine church.

Well, anyway, the kids got up after a lot of argument and debate. The whole atmosphere was bad. They got up and disappeared in their various activities for the afternoon.

A lady turned to us, and she said, I guess you can see that we have a problem. I said, it looks to me like you have four of them. She said, you're right.

How did you raise your children? Well, that started a long conversation. It lasted a couple of hours at the table while we discussed the question of raising children in this tumultuous age. We went on into the evening service that night, and I preached.

I was to be there through the following Friday evening. When it came to Wednesday night, I walked into the church, and I sensed immediately there was something wrong. The whole atmosphere was electrified, and one of the elders came, and he said, I don't know how you're going to preach here tonight.

Have you heard what happened this afternoon? No, I haven't heard. He said, you know that family where you were on Sunday and had dinner? Yes, that gentleman owns a steel mill outside of the city. They're well-to-do people, and these boys of his, and you must know, sir, by now that these boys have been problem children all the way down to the youngest one.

They've been problem kids for a long time, both in the church and in the family. Well, sometimes when they're out of school, the father gives them a little job to do to earn a little extra money working around the steel mill, and this afternoon the three oldest boys, 16, 14, 12, maybe around through there, they were coming out of the steel mill. The oldest boy was driving the car.

He's already had all kinds of trouble breaking the law driving his car, but as they came out on the highway, an 18-wheeler barreling down the road at 70 miles an hour struck them side on and drove them head on into another 18-wheeler coming the other direction, and out of that twisted ball of steel they picked three bodies. The oldest boy was killed instantly. The second boy was also killed instantly, and at that moment the third was hanging on by his fingernails for life in the hospital.

The good lady asked us to come and sit down, and most reluctantly we went. That's the time when you wish you were anything but a preacher of the word. You'd rather be an airplane pilot or something else, because you do stand somewhat in the place of God to answer God the charges that might be brought against God, and this good lady said, last Sunday you gave us a lot of good advice about how to raise children.

What do you have to say to me now? Do you know what I've been doing all day today? I've been picking out coffins for my boys. What do you have to say to me now? That's when one is struck dumb, and all I could say was, my dear lady, I don't know why God has done what he's done for you. I don't know.

I can't interpret this heavy hand of the Lord upon your life. I don't pretend to know the answer. All I can say to you is something like this.

When I was a kid in school, one of my biggest problem subjects was mathematics. I hated algebra with a passion, and the only way I passed it was because we had a textbook that had all the answers to all the problems in the back, like an index, and I said I used to work all the problems from the answer back to the problem. My teacher was never satisfied.

She didn't like that. She said, no, you start with a problem and work it to the answer, the solution. I was having trouble doing that, but I said, you know, I knew there was an answer to every problem, and it was in that book, and I know there's an answer to every problem of life.

We may not find the solution to it here and now, but the answer is in God's book, whether it's this book or his book he's writing in heaven, and one day we'll understand why we were thwarted, blocked, hindered, even in our service for God. Paul must have been perplexed by this blot, but it turned out to be God's larger, grander, greater plan for him, and he must have come to the place where he was willing to accept this from the Lord. But, then the same apostle faced quite another problem.

He had privileges not afforded to anybody else, apparently, on the face of this earth, for he was once caught up into heaven while he was still in the flesh, and he saw things that nobody else had ever seen before. In fact, he's never told us all the things he saw because he was forbidden even to write about them, and then he says something like this, and lest I should be exalted above measure because of the abundance of the revelation, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure. And, what did he do? Listen to what he says, "...for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, three times, that it might depart from me." And, what was God's answer before? No, flat out no.

So, you see, sometimes God denies our petitions in reference to our pain, sometimes in reference to our plan even to serve him, but sometimes in reference to our pain. From Paul's experience, we learn a number of things. He had a thorn in the flesh.

This was a physical thing. I don't agree with those Bible scholars who say this. It was the tormenting, harassing, persecuting Judaizers.

I don't believe that. I think all the context here would indicate that this was a physical thing that Paul was suffering. The Greek word that's used here is an ugly word.

It means a palisade or pointed stick for impaling victims, and it's here used as a metaphor to describe Paul's impalement by pain. It was like a living crucifixion. We don't positively know what it was.

Just a hint, writing to his Galatian believers and brethren, he reminds them of how much they cared for him, and he said there was a time when you would have plucked your very own eyes out for me. You knew about my weakness of the flesh. Some feel that that's a hint as to what was bothering him, some kind of eye disease of sorts.

Whatever it was, it was a painful experience, and Paul says that this was sent to him as a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Now, I don't believe that all pain and all sickness is from the devil. There are some today insisting on that, and they are telling us that all we need to do is to rebuke the devil, and fever will leave you, and sickness will go, and cancer will be cured, and all the rest of it.

I don't believe that at all. There may be times when God allows Satan to buffet one of his children, but it's always with a tight control of divine omnipotence on the reins. Satan never has total control over the child of God.

God allows only so much. It was so in the case of Paul. This was God's permissive will and the enemy's diabolical purpose, and Paul tells us why he was so suffering.

He said, it was preventive suffering. I was buffeted, lest I should be puffed up, and so what does he do? He does the perfectly normal thing. He prayed about it.

He asked God concerning it. He uses a strong word. He said, I besought the Lord.

He must have pleaded with God, and he says three times over, I asked him, and you notice what he says. He's very plain about this. I didn't ask him to help me to overcome.

I didn't ask him to give me strength in the midst of my suffering. I asked the Lord to take it away, get it out of my life. That's as normal as breathing.

That's what we pray for, don't we? Sometimes, when sickness comes, disease afflicts us, what's the perfectly normal thing to do? Oh God, won't you take this away? Now, we oftentimes add the little phrase, if it be thy will, and we mean that, but there are some times when we want to say to God that, whether it's your will or not, will you please take it away? I can't take this. Remove it. So, he says, that's what I did.

I asked persistently, and then God said no, and Paul stopped praying for that. That shows great spiritual maturity. When God says no, let's don't pester him again.

It's a finished subject. You never find Paul ever again praying about his infirmity. He had the answer from God.

He lived with it, because, you see, he learned some lessons in that school of pain, in that place of divine denial. He learned that even when he was weak in body, that God's strength was made perfect in his weakness, and he says, if that's the case, then most gladly will I glory in my infirmity. I don't know that I have come to that place in my life.

I cannot say I've attained to that. It's a grand level of spiritual maturity. The glory in your infirmity, because he says, I have learned this.

I take pleasure in my weaknesses. I take pleasure in the insults that come my way. I take pleasure in the necessities when I have to do without even the things you need in life when I'm hungry, or I'm cold, or I'm lonesome.

Yes, I even take pleasure in distresses in order that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I've learned that when God says no, he has a grander, greater, more glorious purpose in his denial of my petition, and it was so. So, God sometimes denies our requests for plans for service for him, and so we have to find another slot, and we must be content in that place.

Sometimes he denies our requests when we earnestly pray for deliverance from pain, and then sometimes he denies our plans for his glory in our lives. Let me see if I can illustrate this. Will you turn to the Old Testament for a moment this evening? Let's go back to First Chronicles, 17th chapter of First Chronicles.

There was a day when David was sitting in his palace. He looked around and saw how ornate that house was in which he dwelt, and he says to his prophet Nathan, look, here I dwell in a house of cedars, and look at the covenant of the Lord. It resides in a tent.

That's not fitting, and Nathan said to David, do all this in your heart, for God is with you. So, it came to pass the same night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying, go and tell David, my servant, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not build me a house for dwelling. David says, I'm going to build a house for God.

It'll be a house worthy of his great and glorious name, and Nathan said, that's great. There's nothing wrong with that. God's with you.

Do it. The Lord had to keep old Nathan awake half the night to tell him, you made a mistake, you better go back and tell David the king that I said no, he can't build me a house. So, God denied a great resolve on the part of David.

This was God's flat no. Now, sometimes, I guess, God denies something that we want to do for him, and we don't understand it. We don't see it like we ought to see it.

At first, I think David must have been hurt. His purpose was good. His motive was right.

He wanted to build a house for God. Later on, he learned the Lord had to tell him plainly why he was disqualified. He says, you know, you have shed a lot of blood on the earth, and I can't allow my house to be built by such bloody hands as yours.

So, I'm going to deny this desire of yours. You can't do it. On the other hand, I'm going to build you a house, and then follows the great Davidic covenant in which God promises that a son of David's loins will sit upon David's throne forever and forever.

But, David, he's having some trouble in all of this. He doesn't understand it for quite some time, and then finally you remember that Solomon built the house. And let's turn to 2nd Chronicles 6 for just a moment.

When the moment comes for the dedication of this house, Solomon is praying and preaching, and we read in 2nd Chronicles 7 verse 4, Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before Jehovah, and King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So, the king and all the people dedicated the house of God, and the priests waited on their offices. Now, if you back up into chapter 6, you'll hear the king's words on this occasion.

It's 2nd Chronicles chapter 6, starting with the first verse. Jehovah has said that he would dwell in the thick darkness, but I have built a house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling forever. And the king turned his face and blessed the whole congregation of Israel, and all the congregation of Israel stood.

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, Since the day I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there. Neither chose

I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel, but I have now chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel. Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

But the Lord said to David my father, For as much as it was in thine heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart. You know what God recognized with David in this instance? Well, he had to say no to him, and I think he said it to him as gently as he couldn't say it. It wasn't a harsh no, it's just that David you can't do it.

I'm going to do something for you, on the other hand, but your son is going to build a house for me. And I think that God recognized that David's heart was right. That was the thing that impressed the Lord.

It was in thine heart to do this thing, but I can't let you do it. I cannot let you build. Now, maybe God has been saying to some of us, I can't let you.

I haven't chosen you. I haven't answered your prayers when you said, Lord, use me somehow. When I first became a Christian, I took everything at face value that I found in the Bible.

I never had any arguments with the Bible. I didn't know that much about it. I was totally ignorant of the scriptures, so I was an extremely naive Christian, and I can remember somebody invited me after a little while to go to a Bible conference up in Montrose, Pennsylvania, where up in the mountains one day, I settled forever the question of who's going to run this life of mine.

I gave my life to the Lordship of Christ, and I said, Lord, you run it. I can't. So then, shortly after that, somebody said, would you like to go down to a place called Keswick? It was in New Jersey, and I knew it was down where they grow mosquitoes, and it was in the Pine Flats, and I thought, oh, I don't want to go to that place, but I went.

When I went, there were two men speaking that week. I'd never been to a conference like that in my life before. These two men were total opposites to each other.

One was Captain Reginald Wallace from England, a tall military man, and the other was little, sawed-off, hammered down Isaac Page from China, and Isaac Page was as bald as a billiard ball on top. He always wore a cap to cover the empty spaces, and if you, if any of you ever heard Isaac Page, he was a man blessed with wonderful humor, but he had a big heart for China. One day, I saw these two men talking on the path at Keswick.

I really, I was following them around. I was hoping to hear what they had to say. I want to hang on every word, and here I saw big Captain Wallace looking down at Isaac Page, and Isaac Page looking up at Captain Wallace, and they're chattering away, and a little boy came along, and he began to tug at Isaac Page's coat tail two or three times, and finally, Page, who was engrossed in this conversation with Captain Wallace, he wheeled around and he said, what's the matter? The boy jumped out of his shoes.

The boy said, please, sir, please, sir, I've lost my Bible. What's the name? He says, Holy Bible Illustrated, sir. Boy, did we get a sermon that night.

It was beautiful. A sermon on the necessity for Bibles, Holy One Illustrated by Holy Listeners, a great message. Well, before that week was out, Isaac Page gave an invitation.

He ate, slept, drank, talked, dreamed China. He was from China, and he was calling for men and women to volunteer to go to China. I sat in that audience, I was a young man, nothing wrong with me physically, and I had just been saved, and I just surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, and the Word of God came to me and said, why don't you go? I said, me? To China? Yes, to China.

Are you willing? And I think I said something like this to the Lord, you'll have to teach me Chinese, because I don't know anything about it, but I'm willing, and I can remember standing, but first to stand in a number, followed by a number of young people saying, I'm willing to go. I'll go. God can take me and use me.

I meant it. I meant it with all my heart. Now, I never got to China until about two years ago.

See, what did the Lord do? He blocked my way. I wanted to do something for him, and make this life count for him, and I prayed about it, and I believe he said to me, no, I'm not going to send you. Is something wrong with me, Lord? No.

Instead, I want to use you as a recruiting sergeant, and send others in your place. If you're to move around and try to get other people to take your place, they'll do a better job than you can do. In all my life, it's been my privilege to challenge all across this country, men and women, and to God's glory, I can say that there are literally hundreds who have gone to all parts of the world as a result of our call for them to yield themselves.

Sometimes, when God says no, you've got a good motive. It's for his glory. You've got to sit down and listen to what he has to say.

I would like you to see David's reaction, and then I'm finished. Will you look at 2 Samuel, the book of 2 Samuel, and I want chapter 7. After David hears God say no to his desire to build a house for the Lord, then God says to him, I'm going to build one for you, and you're reading the 16th verse of 2 Samuel 7, thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee, thy throne shall be established forever according to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. How did David take it? Then went King David in and sat before the Lord.

He got quiet before God, and let God talk to him, and he talked to God, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? What is my house that thou hast bought me hitherto? This was not was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And all the way through, David is talking about the Lord God as being the sovereign God. He didn't rebel.

He didn't suck his thumb. He didn't complain. He didn't whine.

He didn't argue. He said, If this is God's will, then that suits me fine. And in another place, you'll read this.

He said, If I can't build the house, I'll tell you what I can do. I can gather the materials before I die, and you'll read in the record that David saw to it that they gathered timbers, and they gathered all kinds of things and tapestries in preparation for the building of the temple. He couldn't build it himself, but he could supply the sinews for doing it.

You, God may have spoken to you about giving your life years ago for service somewhere in the world, and somehow, in the mystery of God's providence, he blocked your way. Maybe you prayed about it, and

he said, No, he has other plans for your life. How have you reacted? Do you realize that perhaps he's called you to supply the wherewithal for others to go? Are you going to leave all the money, whatever you got, to your grandkids to spend? I love that bumper sticker that says, We're spending our grandchildren's inheritance.

I think that's great. I know Christian people who are more concerned about the welfare of either their children or their grandchildren than they are for the glory of God, and they never leave a nickel to the things, to the house of God, to the people of God, or to any missionary agency. I'd like to feel that after I'm dead and gone, my money is still working for the Lord, and somebody is serving him because I made it possible.

I don't have that much, but whatever little bit I got, I'd like to devote it to him. See, you may not be able to build the house, but you can help to supply some of the things. So, if God has been saying no to you, it may not be to thwart you in your purposes to serve or pleasing, but to enlarge your vision and eventually bring you into a larger place of usefulness.

If God's been saying no to some prayer for deliverance from pain or distress, it's not because he doesn't love you or he's seeking to punish you, but in order to empower you for greater effectiveness in his service. And, if God has been saying no to some cherished plan in your life, it may be in order to draw you into a fresh and greater experience of his own sufficiency for our every need. There was a lady who was captured by the Japanese and interned on a boat in the war, and she had 22 Chinese, 23 Chinese people with her.

They were believers, and the Japs, they kept them on this ship, and they didn't feed them for a couple of days. They had no food. She wrote a letter back home, and she said this, that I could have borrowed the money from a Russian Jew, but I felt that I ought to trust the Lord, and that night when I had no faith for food for the morrow, and I couldn't sleep, I was reminded of a few lines of a poem, and this is the poem that she read.

I know my God is able to deliver, able to save from direst human ill, able as when he saved the Hebrew children, almighty still. But, if perchance his plans are not as my plan, if hidden darkness should my pathway be, if when I plead he does not seem to answer your care for me, then though men stop and bitterly deride me, listen, I fling my challenge to the sky. God may deliver, but if not, I'll trust him and trust him die.

In our God, that's trust supreme. Is there discipline in God's denials of our requests? Yes. We need to ask him for the grace to learn the discipline, and not complain, for he doeth all things well.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, many times we have besought thee for some things. Thou hast delayed the answer, and sometimes thou hast granted it, and some things we pray for for a long time.

We have not yet seen a full and sufficient answer for it, and there are times when it seems to us that thou hast whispered to us, no, I cannot and will not do that for you. Forgive us if we doubt it. Forgive us if when the clouds are thick, we can't see through them, or the heavens are brass and we can't hear from thee.

Forgive us if we doubted thee, but as this poet said, God may deliver, but if not, we'll trust him and trust him die in trust, because he is the God who doeth all things well. Let's hear our prayer tonight, for we pray in a name that gets all things done in heaven, the name of our risen glorified Jesus Christ.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7938.mp3>  
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