**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | When God Says No |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | James 4:1-4 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2134 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Prayer is the Christian’s greatest privilege.
      1. Prayer, too, is often our greatest failure.
         1. There is no substitute for prayer.
   2. We need to learn how to pray.
   3. James 4:1-4
      1. In this passage, James tells us of two major problems concerning prayer:
         1. The problem of unasked prayer
            1. James 4:2
            2. Sometimes, we just don’t pray.

We have not because we ask not.

God desires to bless us.

Jeremiah 33:3

* + - 1. The problem of unanswered prayer.
         1. James 4:3

We have not because we ask amiss.

* 1. God answers our prayers in four basic ways:
     1. The answer may be direct.
        1. God says, “Yes.”
     2. The answer may be different.
        1. God says, “Better.”
        2. If God does not give us what we ask, He may give us something far better than we ask.
           1. Romans 8:26
           2. Ephesians 3:20
     3. The answer may be delayed.
        1. God says, “Wait.”
        2. Isaiah 30:18
        3. Matthew 7:7
           1. The Greek verb used in this Scripture means to keep on knocking and to keep on seeking.
        4. With God, timing is more important than time.
           1. James 1:4

“Perfect” in this passage does not mean “without flaw;” it means “mature.”

* + 1. The answer may be denied.
       1. God says, “No.”
       2. James 4:3
       3. Sometimes prayers are not answered.
          1. This does not mean that the promises of God have failed.

If we turn on the light switch in our homes and the lights do not come on, we don’t say that electricity has failed or that Thomas Edison was a fraud; we check the fuse box or make sure we paid the electric bill.

* + - * 1. When prayers go unanswered, we need to ask why.
  1. In today’s message, we will look at six principles and ask why God does answer our prayers, and then perhaps we’ll see why sometimes He does not answer our prayers.

1. WE ARE TO PRAY IN HIS NAME (John 14:6)
   1. When we go to God in prayer, we must go through the Lord Jesus Christ.
      1. John 14:13-14
      2. John 16:23-24
      3. Without Jesus, there is no way to the Father.
         1. Jesus doesn’t just point us to the way; Jesus is the way.
   2. To pray in Jesus’ name means that you have received Him as your Lord, Savior and Master.
   3. What does it mean to pray in Jesus’ name?
      1. It means to pray with His approval.
         1. We cannot sign His name to something He does not approve.
      2. It means to pray for His acclaim.
         1. It is not for our glory but for His.
      3. It means to pray with His authority.
         1. We have signed His name to our prayer.
         2. We are saying that we are His representatives here on Earth, acting on the behalf of Jesus Christ in Heaven.
            1. We are praying with the power of attorney.
         3. Only if you are a child of God can you pray with His authority.
            1. Do not forge His name to an unauthorized prayer.
2. WE ARE TO PRAY IN THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 6:18)
   1. It isn’t enough to be saved so that we can pray in His name; we must also be surrendered so that we can pray in the Spirit.
   2. There are many commands in the Bible to pray in the Spirit.
      1. Ephesians 6:18
      2. Jude 20
   3. We are to pray in the Spirit because of our human weakness.
      1. Romans 8:26
         1. The word “helpeth” in this passage means “to take hold of.”
            1. This is a compound word; it’s prefix means “together with” and “instead of.”

The Holy Spirit helps us - He does it instead of us, and He does it together with us.

* + - 1. When we pray, the Holy Spirit is the one who guides, energizes and inspires our prayers.
         1. He is the one who puts power to our prayers.

He does it instead of us, but He also does it together with us.

We cannot do it without Him, and He won’t do it without us.

* 1. We are to pray to the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit.
  2. The Holy Spirit also instructs our prayers.
     1. There are so many things to pray for and many ways in which to pray for those things.
     2. The Holy Spirit takes our prayers and transforms them so that they are acceptable to God the Father.
        1. He does this, “with groanings that cannot be uttered.”
           1. Romans 8:26
           2. The word “groanings” is often used to describe a woman in labor.
           3. There are things that we cannot articulate.
     3. Because of our human ignorance, we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.
  3. If we want our prayers to be answered:
     1. We need to be saved.
     2. We need to surrender to the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to guide and energize our prayers.

1. WE ARE TO PRAY IN THE WILL OF GOD (1 John 5:14)
   1. When we are saved and Spirit-filled, then we will pray in the will of God.
      1. 1 John 5:14
      2. When we pray in the Spirit, we will be praying the will of God because the Holy Spirit will not guide us to pray for anything outside the will of God.
         1. If we do pray for something that is not the will of God, the Holy Spirit will say, “This is what he’s asking, but this is what he needs.”
   2. Prayer is not an exercise to bend God’s will to fit our will; prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.
      1. To be willing to do the will of God means signing the contract at the bottom and asking the Lord to fill it in.
         1. It means desiring God’s will anytime, any place, anywhere and at any cost.
      2. Romans 12:1-2
         1. God’s will is good, acceptable and perfect.
         2. God wants for us what we would want for ourselves if we had sense enough to want it.
   3. The prayer that gets to Heaven is the prayer that starts in Heaven.
      1. Prayer is not some method by which man on Earth gets his will done in Heaven; prayer is a method where God in Heaven gets His will done on Earth.
         1. Matthew 6:10
   4. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, then putting that desire into our hearts because we’re praying in the Spirit, and then sending that prayer back to Heaven in the power of the cross because we’re praying in Jesus’ name.
   5. Oftentimes our prayers go unanswered because we’re praying outside the will of God.
      1. James 4:1-3
         1. The word “lusts” in this passage means “strong desire.”
         2. The word “members” is referring to our eyes, hands, feet, heart, etc.
         3. We ask with the wrong intent.
      2. We can ask for personal needs but not for selfish needs.
   6. Psalm 37:4
      1. Our delights determine our desires.
      2. We must delight in the Lord, not in the things of this world.
   7. When our prayers go unanswered, it does not mean that God’s promises have failed; it means we are selfish in our prayers.
      1. Matthew 7:7
      2. Matthew 6:33
         1. This passage is the context for Matthew 7:7
   8. The Bible gives us several instances where people came to Jesus asking for things, and the answer was no.
      1. Luke 12:13-15
         1. The man in this passage had a covetous spirit.
      2. Matthew 20:20-22
         1. They had no understanding, and the mother was not asking in the will of God.
2. WE ARE TO PRAY IN OBEDIENCE (Psalm 66:18)
   1. It is foolish to pray if we have unconfessed sin in our hearts and in our lives.
      1. If God were to bless us and answer our prayers when we know we are not right with Him, then He would be reinforcing our sin nature and enabling us as sinners.
      2. Psalm 66:18
      3. Isaiah 1:15-16
      4. Isaiah 59:1-4
         1. This passage can apply to modern America.
            1. God will not necessarily answer our prayers if we choose leadership that is corrupt over a God who is holy.
      5. 1 Samuel 8:18
         1. We cannot expect God to just overrule and override the consequences, either personally or nationally, when we pray in disobedience.
      6. Ezra 9:6
      7. James 5:16
      8. 1 John 3:22
      9. Joshua 7:10-11
         1. God told Joshua to deal with the sin in the camp if Joshua wanted God to hear his prayers.
   2. There are not only sins of commission, but there are also sins of omission.
      1. We sometimes think we are okay if we’re not lying, cheating, stealing, etc.
      2. One of the great sins in America today is that we have failed to help the poor and needy.
         1. Proverbs 21:13
            1. This passage references a hard heart.
         2. Luke 6:38
         3. Philippians 4:16
            1. This verse provides context for Philippians 4:19.
            2. God will not supply our need if we are selfish.
            3. Many of us have all that God can trust us with financially.

Luke 6:38

We shovel out, and God shovels in; God has a much bigger shovel than we do.

1. WE ARE TO PRAY IN FELLOWSHIP (Mark 11:25-26)
   1. We cannot expect God to answer our prayers if we are harboring a grudge in our heart toward someone else.
      1. Mark 11:25-26
      2. If we have hate in our heart, then we cannot expect God to hear our prayers.
      3. Is the grudge worth not having your prayers answered?
   2. Sometimes the grudge is between husband and wife.
      1. 1 Peter 3:7
2. WE ARE TO PRAY IN FAITH (Matthew 21:22)
   1. Hebrews 11:6
      1. Pray and believe, you’ll receive; pray in doubt, you’ll do without.
      2. We cannot please God without faith.
   2. The emphasis should not be as much upon our faith as it is upon the God of our faith.
   3. Faith is not positive thinking or wishing to make something so. Faith is hearing from God, believing God and acting upon what we hear and believe.
   4. If we give our hearts to Jesus and abide by the first five steps outlined in this message, then we will find that faith will be automatic.
      1. We will find it easier to pray, believe and receive from God what we need and want.
3. CONCLUSION
   1. It all begins with praying in the name of Jesus.
      1. John 16:24
   2. We cannot pray in the name of Jesus if we haven’t first received Him into our hearts as Lord and Savior.
      1. Being a member of a church or denomination does not save us.
      2. Have you surrendered your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?
   3. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
   4. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16