

THE PROCLAMATION

PROCLAIMING LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES... ISAIAH 61:1



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 CrossWay Fellowship
Church

www.crosswayfellowshipchurch.org



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Greetings friends!

As we just celebrated another Easter season I hope all of you had the chance to hunt a few candy filled eggs, color a few hard boiled eggs, and eat a few Cadbury eggs. When I was a kid we had to color the hardboiled eggs, hunt the hardboiled eggs, and eat the hardboiled eggs. Times have changed a little bit to say the least. But even though our traditions change from time to time there is one thing that has not changed at all. And that is the amazing power of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! He is very much alive today and he is very much concerned about you. His eyes are upon you and his ear is open to your cry. I pray that this message will be right on time for those of you who are going through the trial of your life.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Walton".

Pastor Dennis Walton

Come worship with us!

- Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
- Sunday morning worship 10:50 a.m.
(Children's Church provided)
(Nursery provided)
- Sunday evening worship 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday worship/Bible study 7:00 p.m.
(Youth classes of all ages provided)

“Unanswered Prayers”

Before I begin this message about unanswered prayers I would like to establish the fact that there is really no such thing as “unanswered” prayers. God answers every single prayer that we pray. You might say, “now wait a minute Dennis, I prayed for such and such but it never happened.” The reason for that is simple. God’s answer to that prayer was either “no” or “wait.” We have got it in our minds that the only answered prayers are the ones that happened the way we prayed them. But that’s just simply not true. God answers every single prayer we pray. Sometimes the answer is “yes”, sometimes the answer is “no”, and sometimes the answer is “wait.” We may never understand why God chooses the answer that He does, so we must just learn to trust Him. We have no way of knowing the outcome of certain situations that we pray for but God does and He will always give the answer that is in our best interest.

We obviously prefer the “yes” answers and many times God does what we ask and we see immediate results. For example, last night in our Wednesday night Bible study my wife’s grandpa asked the church to pray for him because he was having terrible pains in his side. So bad in fact that it had kept him awake for several days and he had considered going to the emergency room. (*Which if you know Glen you know it must have hurt bad for him to consider going to the ER*) So we all gathered around him and laid hands on his side where it hurt and began to pray. We prayed for just a very short moment and the power of God moved on his body. It felt like 1000 volts had just shot through his side. With tears streaming down his face he immediately began to rejoice

because the pain was instantly gone. We prayed and God answered “yes.”

The “wait” and “no” answers, however, we are not quite so fond of. Yet whether we like it or not they are just as much a part of God’s prayer answering process and the “yes” answers are. And if we will admit it, many times we are glad he didn’t give us the “yes” we were hoping for.

Let’s talk a little bit about the “wait” answers. Again, just because you prayed and it didn’t happen right away doesn’t mean God didn’t answer your prayer. I’ll give you an example. Several months ago my mother-in-law, Glenda, started having a lot of trouble with her eyes. Her eyesight was all of a sudden declining very rapidly. She went to several eye doctors and they all told her the same thing, “You have the worst case of severe dry eye we have ever seen. And on top of that you have arthritis in your eyes.” Each one of them gave her a different kind of eye drop in hopes of making them better but none of them worked. One of the doctors simply said, “I just don’t know what else to do for you.” Through this whole process we obviously were praying for her but it *seemed* as though our prayers were not being answered. Each day grew more discouraging as she struggled to see how to do everyday tasks. Finally, one Sunday morning she was sitting at the piano at church, leading the worship service and couldn’t even see the words to the song she was singing. After struggling through the song for a while she stopped the song and asked everyone to come around and pray for her. We did...nothing happened. Then something interesting happened that I just simply can’t explain but it still gives me goose bumps at the thought. Our assistant pastor, Jeff

Conger, told us about a dream he had a few nights before that. Now keep in mind he didn’t know that Glenda was having problems with her eyes. He dreamed that we were praying for Glenda at church and then after a lapse of time we prayed for her again. So he suggested I go ahead and preach my sermon and then have the church pray for her again at the end of the service. So that’s what we did. Only this time the result was MUCH different. As we began to pray in the Spirit and plea the blood of Jesus over her, in that moment her “wait” became a “yes!” Oh how God moved in a mighty way! With both hands stretched to heaven she rejoiced and cried and then rejoiced some more. She staggered all over the front of the church giving glory to Jesus Christ, her Healer. She could see perfectly! She jumped back on that piano and I’m telling you we had church! She could see the music with no problem. To this day she can see fine.

So why did God choose to do it that way? The answer is simply this; I have absolutely no idea. Oh I could guess and try to come up with some real spiritual reasons but the truth is, God is God and He does things the way He knows is best. And He wants us to learn to trust him during the waiting period. Her “wait” proved to be just as much of a blessing, and possibly more, than if she would have received an immediate “yes” the first time she prayed. Not to mention, a lot of people got to see God work a miracle that they wouldn’t have got to see if He would have healed her at home the first time she prayed. I sure know I was blessed to have witnessed it!

Take a look at this Psalm written by David and see if you can relate to how he felt during this period of his life.

Psalms: 69:1-3

1. **“Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.**
2. **I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.**
3. **I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.”**

Apparently David didn't like waiting on God any more than we do. Yet we find in many of his writings that he had to. And if you've ever studied his life you know that that guy went through a lot. I mean a lot! There were times in his life that people were out for his blood. They were hunting him down like a dog with every intention of killing him. I think we can all see why he wanted God to hurry things up a bit. But even with his enemies on his heels God didn't end all his problems right away. God was with David and He protected him but He made him wait for the answer to his prayers. But the truth is David learned a lot while hiding in caves, and developed a trust for God that was stronger than it ever was back in the days when he was just a shepherd and life was hunky dory.

Let's take a look into David's heart as he cries out, “God I'm drowning here. I feel like I'm sinking and I need you to save me, please! Lord I'm tired of crying while I wait for you to come through for me!” I'm quite confident that many of you reading this right now have prayed this very same prayer. You are in the trial of your life and you're holding on to faith for all your worth. The load of your burden is so heavy you feel like you can't go on another day. You've cried until you can't cry anymore and it has left you with the mind numbing question, “God where are you?” If that describes you then I pray that you will take comfort in the fact that God laid this message on my heart for you personally. I too

have experienced moments like this in which all hope seemed lost and felt as though God had forsaken me. But just as He did for David, my Lord showed up in a mighty way and healed my broken heart. He showed me that during the times He seemed the farthest away was actually when He was the closest. God didn't get mad at David for feeling this way and He's not mad at you. God understands our limited understanding and is very patient with us as we learn to trust Him completely. But we can only learn to trust Him completely through waiting.

I've learned a lot in 17 years of ministry and the main thing I've learned is that I still have a lot to learn. But over the years I have come to a conclusion. The longer I serve God the more I become convinced that every single Christian must experience “unanswered” prayers. Keeping in mind that by “unanswered” I mean “wait” and “no”. I'm talking about a season in your life when it seems like the heavens are made of brass and you can't get your prayers through. A time when God seems so distant and is not hearing you. A time when you question if it is doing any good to pray and you feel like you are wasting your breath.

The reason why I believe every Christian must endure a season like that is because it's during those times that determines whether we have true faith or not. Only through the testing and trying of our faith can we know if our faith is real. If I only trust God when He answers my prayers the way I want Him to, then I don't have true faith. True faith never says, “Lord give me everything I want when I want it or I won't serve you.” True faith does not go up and down when the circumstances go up and down. True faith remains constant and steadfast even when things are

going bad. True faith says, “I will trust and serve Him because of who He is, not because of what He can do for me.” I'm not saying that faith like that comes easy but I am saying that it is attainable. But only when it is tried.

Consider Job for example. Who can talk about waiting for an answer to prayer without talking about him? Here's a guy who loses everything he owns in one day, either by thieves or freak acts of nature. The same day he gets the news that all his children were killed by a wind storm that came out of nowhere. Then if that weren't enough, he wakes up one morning with boils from head to toe, causing the worse physical pain he had ever experienced. Here's a man that loves God, literally engulfed by tremendous pain. Mental pain, emotional pain, spiritual pain, and physical pain. This is a man of prayer that has dedicated his life to seeking God. Yet now it seems like every prayer just falls to the ground. There's no telling how many times Job prayed, asking God to take away the pain and change his circumstances. But here is where we find true faith at work. True faith does not show up as much in the “yes” answers. It shows up in the “wait” and “no” answers. Listen to what Job said right smack dab in the middle of the worst trial of his life, **“though he kill me yet will I trust him.” (Job 13:15)** He is literally saying, “even if I never get my prayers answered and even if I die from this, I will still trust my God.” How could he pray that? Because his faith was established on who God is, not what He could do for him. Of course we know the end of the story, how that God does come through for Job in a mighty way, giving him back twice as much as he lost to begin with. But we must be careful not to think that the point of Job's story is all about getting what we want and more in

the end of our trial. The most important lesson in his story is that Job did not know how things were going to turn out but he trusted God in his trial anyway.

Okay, so we've talked about the "yes" answers to our prayers and the "wait" answers to our prayers. Now let's talk about everyone's favorite...the dreaded "no" answer to our prayers. This is the answer in which we usually have a tendency to falsely accuse God of not answering our prayer. Let's face it, we didn't like to hear the word "no" when we were kids and we still don't like to hear it today. Yet if we'll admit it, we now understand why our parents said no so often. As children with limited understanding we didn't know what was best for us. But as adults with wisdom and experience they did. If a little boy asks his dad for a grenade for his birthday, he doesn't understand why the dad says no. But the dad knows that it is in the best interest of the boy, and the whole neighborhood, to say no. Parents also say no to their children for the simple fact that they don't want them to become spoiled and unappreciative. You show me a kid that gets everything he wants whenever he wants it and I'll show you a spoiled brat. They will feel entitled to all their wants and then when they don't get what they want they will throw a fit. So only a good parent will use the word "no" frequently.

So why does God tell us no? Because He is a good parent. We are human beings with a very limited understanding and absolutely no knowledge of what is going to happen down the road in the future. God on the other hand is wise and all knowing. He knows what the outcome of our prayers will be if He answers "yes". If He knows it will not be in our best interest, He will say "no". Not to mention, he doesn't want us to become spoiled and unappreciative either. Let's face

it, the more things go our way the more we expect and the less content we become. Then when things don't go our way we fall apart because we are not equipped to handle it. Spiritual maturity is only gained when our Heavenly Father loves us enough to tell us no.

Even the Bible heroes that we admire so much didn't get every prayer answered the way they wanted it. Despite all the great things they did for God and the miracles they witnessed, they too were very familiar with the word "no." To Moses God said, "No, you can't enter the promise land." To David he said, "No, you can't build me a Temple but your son will." Take Paul for example. In **II Corinthians 12:7-10** we read a conversation that is taking place between Paul and God. The whole visit centers around the fact that God had revealed the truth of the gospel to Paul more clearly than anyone else in church history. And because of his gift of understanding God allowed him to have a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from getting cocky about it. The Bible is not perfectly clear about what Paul's thorn in the flesh was but we know it was something that annoyed him and caused him continual grief and pain. I think the term "thorn in the flesh" makes that pretty obvious. I've never heard anyone who had a thorn in their body say, "boy that feels good. I think I'll grab that brier bush again and get a few more of those stuck in my hand." I was trying to get a thorn out of my son's foot one time and you would have thought I was trying to remove his spleen with a spoon. He squirmed and squealed through the whole process. Needless to say, thorns are not a pleasant experience. Okay, let's get back to Paul and God's conversation. Paul was so tired of his thorn in the flesh that he asked God three times to take it away from him. And all

three times God answered with a big fat "no". He explained to Paul that there was a purpose for the pain he was having to endure. God knew that pride is one of mankind's greatest enemies and that in order to keep Paul humble; he had to answer "no" to his prayer. However, along with the "no", God gave him a great promise that I believe is still in effect for you and I today. He promised Paul that He would give him the grace to go through everything he had to go through. He said, "Through your weakness I'm going to show you how strong I can be in your life." But the next part of the conversation is the most interesting to me. Paul just simply accepted God's answer. In fact, he almost seemed excited about it. He didn't get mad at God and threaten to quit serving him. He didn't accuse God of failing him. He basically said, "Lord if that's what it takes to have your power in me, then I will gladly endure this thorn and accept your 'no' because I trust you." Wow! Now that is real faith! That would be like your sixteen year old child coming to you and saying, "Mom and Dad will you please buy me a Porsche for my birthday?" And then of course as a loving parent you say, "Absolutely not. First of all we don't have a gazillion dollars. Second of all those cars are very fast and you might be seriously hurt or even killed." And then your child responds by saying, "Well glory to God! Thank you Mom and Dad for looking out for my well-being. I will gladly drive that 85 Pinto you bought for me."

And I think it is very important for us to recognize what kind of blessings came out of Paul's pain and suffering. Paul wrote the majority of the New Testament. Do you know where he was when he wrote it? He wasn't sitting in a lawn chair on the beach in Hawaii drinking from a coconut with a little umbrella in

it. He didn't just one day say to himself, "Boy I feel good today so I think I'll write the Bible." It was the exact opposite. When Paul did most of his writing he was in a dark, cold, smelly prison cell. His circumstances were terrible, but out of it came the greatest book ever written. Through Paul's pain God was able to use him to pen down the words that are still saving people's souls today!

I have given a few possible reasons why God might say "no" to your prayers, but let me be completely honest and real with you for a second. I realize that some of you have experienced pain beyond belief. You prayed with all the faith you had and things did not go in your favor. Some have had babies die, some have terminal cancer, and some have had their spouse leave them. There is no end to the list of unspeakable pain that people go through and I'm not telling you that it happened because God was trying your faith or trying to teach you a lesson. Not at all. The fact is I cannot give a reason for those things because I am a human being and I don't understand either. We may never understand why God answers "no" in our darkest hour of need. But I am confident that one day we will. And I am also confident that our Heavenly Father will give us the grace to carry on until that day. He promised that he would not leave us without comfort.

Finally, I want you to consider something you may never have thought about before. Even Jesus Himself had to endure the dreaded answer "no" to his prayer. In the hours leading up to his capture and crucifixion He was very sorrowful and heavy hearted. Oh how he dreaded the excruciating pain of the whipping post and the piercing pain of the cross that he was about to face. He fell on his face and prayed so hard that his sweat was like great drops

of blood. In His agony he prayed: "Oh my Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me." He was asking God to deliver him from having to go through with the cross. But God's answer to Jesus' prayer was a definite "no". The only way for mankind to be saved from sin and have eternal life was for God's perfect Son to pay the price for those sins. If God would have said yes to Jesus' prayer, you and I would be lost with no hope today.

Jesus handled His "no" answer the same way he wants us to handle ours today. He said, "Father, my will is not important. Let your will be done." And yes it did hurt as he endured the mental and physical anguish of the cross. But that pain didn't last forever. After three days in the grave, Jesus rose from the dead to walk in the newness of life as King of kings and Lord of lords! And that, my friends, is what gives us the promise that if God does not take away the pain and trials we are going through, we can rest assured that those pains will not last forever. If we surrender our will to God no matter what, He will raise us up to walk in the newness of life also! He may answer "yes" and bring that newness of life today. Or He may answer "wait" and bring the newness of life tomorrow. Or He may answer "no" and bring the newness of life when you enter the glory of Heaven. But be encouraged, God loves you no matter what His answer may be. Just trust Him.

(You may also listen to this sermon, as well as other sermons, at our website, www.crosswayfellowshipchurch.org)

Decision Time

Life is full of decisions. We make them every day. But this decision is the most important one of your life. Whether God accepts you or rejects you will depend on whether you decide to accept or reject Jesus Christ.

You surely can admit that you have sinned in your life. We all have. And nature itself teaches you that there is a price to pay for your sins. If you commit a crime, you will pay the penalty for it with a fine, jail time, or even the death penalty. By disobeying God's law, we have all sentenced ourselves to death. But God loves us so much that He doesn't want us to die in our sins and spend eternity paying the penalty in Hell. Therefore, He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sins so that we might be saved.

Imagine it like this. Let's say you commit a crime and are sentenced to die in the electric chair. But just as they are about to throw the switch, someone swings the door open and yells, "stop!" To your amazement, the person standing in the door way says, "let him go and I'll take his place." So the warden unlatches the straps, stands you on your feet, and lets you walk out the door. Then he sits the other person in the chair, straps him down, and throws the switch. That is what Jesus did for you and me when He died on the cross.

So now the question is, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to reject Jesus now and pay the penalty yourself on judgment day, or are you going to accept Jesus now and let his sacrifice on the cross pay your penalty for you?

If you will humble yourself and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, repent of your sins, and commit your life to serving Him only, then He will save you from your sins and write your name in Heaven. It will be the best decision of your life! Then get involved in a good Bible believing church where you can be baptized, learn the Word of God, and grow as a Christian.

Folks I'm nothing. I'm just a sinner saved by the grace of God. And my whole purpose in printing The Proclamation is to help you find what I have found...God's love is so sweet!

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