

WHEN GOD SAYS NO (Dt. 3:23-29), Part II

Last week we considered **the Divine Response** to our prayers. Sometimes the Lord answers our prayers by saying, “No”. Sometimes He answers our prayers by saying “Wait a while”. And then also, sometimes He answers our prayers by saying “Yes”, ... but even when He answers “Yes”, He often answers our prayers in a way we would never have considered. ... As we follow on from **The Divine Response**, we enter another category ...

THE DIFFERENT REASONS

- * There are *different reasons* why God sometimes does not *even* answer the prayers of His people. There are *barriers* that hinder prayer.
- * It is not that God is unable to respond or hear ... but sometimes you and I build barriers. One such barrier is the ...
- * *Barrier of sinfulness*, - Ps. 66:18 *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*
- * Where there is unconfessed sin the Lord says He will not hear us, and our prayer will not be answered.
- * Unconfessed sin is sin that holds on to us because we hold on to it, - we cherish it because we love so it much we will not let go of it. We might make all kinds of excuses for *why* we hold on to it, but basically we hold to it because we do not want to let it go, - we will not invest the will-power to move forward and succeed over that sin.
- * It is pure and simply ... disobedience. When you pray with such sin in your heart and such sin hovering over your life God will not respond. You are wasting your time until you get the sin problem sorted out!
- * Such unconfessed sin has an effect upon us individually and corporately. Is. 59:1 *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* ... God even hides His face from His own people on occasions ... Could it be that those prayers you bring before Him are not being heard because of unconfessed sin?
- * A second barrier we can build is the ...
- * *Barrier of selfishness*. James 4:3 *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*
- * One of the dangers in being a Pastor or a church leader or a member is when we look for results, - e.g. people added to the church roll, souls being saved, - ... *we can end up praying for good things for the wrong reasons.*

- * We are looking *for prestige* for our family and for our church ... rather than glory alone for God's Name.
- * We could boast about having a well-attended prayer meeting, or an overflowing children's work, or all sorts of activities which, - in themselves, - ... it would be tremendous ... to have a well-attended prayer meeting, an overflowing children's work, every seat in the church filled ... but if it becomes *our boast* for Pathhead Baptist Church ... *it is a sin* for *we* would be taking the glory instead of giving it to the Lord!
- * All that we do must be for the glory of God, - everything, without exception, ... even the simplest, seemingly insignificant ... I'm an ambassador (Eph. 6:20), - a representative, - of Christ here on earth and therefore I cannot afford to be selfish in taking any glory upon myself and away from Him.
- * Consider Noah ... he served God faithfully, but he only kept seven people out of all the population from the flood, and yet God honoured him, - such a small number! ... Jesus appeared a total failure when He died on the cross, yet His death was an unparalleled success.
- * The cause of God may seem to fail, but *He will accomplish all His purposes* completely, ... right down to the final 'full stop' in His eternal plan!
- * The harvest of souls is not dependent upon the aspirations of an evangelistic committee or a mission event ... the harvest is at the end of the age when we all stand before the judgment throne of Almighty God.
- * Yes, God will not listen to our prayers when they are man-centred.
- * The *barrier of Sinfulness* and the *barrier of Selfishness* are two barriers to unanswered prayer. Another barrier is the ...
- * *Barrier of Stinginess*. Prov. 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. ... I Jn. 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are **pleasing in his sight**. ... If the Lord lays it on your heart to give to His work, and you hold back, you are building up another barrier ... and how can you expect the Lord to give to you, if you withhold from Him?!
- * The *barriers of sinfulness, selfishness, stinginess* and also the ...
- * *Barrier of Strife*. Some professing believers take great delight in upsetting other believers, - it seems to be their 'mission in life'. They enjoy it!

* Paul told the Romans, 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. To the Ephesians he wrote, 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

* Strife among God's people is the devil's work ... and no truly born again believer ought to give the devil the pleasure of being involved in it!

* You see, when you are harbouring *elements of sinfulness, selfishness, stinginess and strife* ... the Bible says the Lord will not listen to your prayers, either in the home or in the church.

* How do you know if they are a hindrance? One of the most obvious ways is when you pray and God brings that issue into your mind ... *that is the hindering thing*... and God reminds you, *Deal with it, now!*

* **The Divine Response, the Different Reasons** God does not answer our prayers ... and finally, ...

THE DENIED REQUESTS

* Isn't it a mercy God does not answer all our prayers! For example, Elijah prayed in great desperation, I Kings 19:4 *It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.* ... Elijah had yet more to do for the Lord ... but he had completely given up! If the Lord had ended his life when he requested it, he would have missed out on the Lord's blessings in his ministry in those wonderful days to come ... and if God would have answered Elijah's prayers just then, God's will would have been interrupted!

* We have no right to gripe and argue with the Lord about the life He has given us for what kind of life would we have outside of Him? Where would we be heading, outside of Christ?

* The whole world has problems, - health problems, financial problems, family problems, employment problems ... and what or who do they have to share those problems with? Nothing that lasts or gives any hope.

* The Lord has a wonderful future for every one of His redeemed children. The psalmist had a faithful mother and father, and yet he said, 27:10 *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* 11 *Teach me thy way.*, ... And again, he said, Ps. 103:13 *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

* The old hymn says,

I trust in God wherever I may be,
Upon the land or on the rolling sea,

For, come what may, from day to day,
My heavenly Father watches over me.

*I trust in God, I know He cares for me,
On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea;
Though billows roll, He keeps my soul,
My heavenly Father watches over me.*

The valley may be dark, the shadows deep
But O, The Shepherd guards His lonely sheep;
And thru the gloom, He'll lead me home
My heavenly Father watches over me.

* In the life of Moses, there was just one last desire he longed for ... and *he* pleaded with the Lord, Deut. 3:23 And I besought the LORD at that time, saying, 24 O Lord GOD, 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? 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. And what did God say? ... God said to His faithful servant ... **NO!** ... Why did God say No? God could not have been any more plain!! ... But what reason did God give for not allowing Moses to enter Canaan?

* To find the answer you need to turn to ... Num. 20:7 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. 9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. 12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify [*honour*] me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. ... This was God's judgment upon Moses.

* Why was this sin so serious? It doesn't sound serious to me. What exactly did Moses do wrong? "You tell me it was the sin of unbelief ... but he had struck the rock before!"

* To see why he was wrong in striking the rock we need to go back to Ex. 17, where he first struck the rock ... and he did not do anything wrong on that occasion!" ... Ex. 17:1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? 3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? 4 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

* On this occasion, (in Ex. 17) the Lord *expressly told* Moses to strike the rock ... *but God did not give him any such instruction in Num 20.*

* What was Moses doing then in Num. 20? ... Moses was relying on his past experience in Ex. 17 and without thinking or listening properly to God he felt justified in striking the rock, but on this occasion he struck the rock twice when he should not have struck it at all!

* What's the 'big deal' though? Once, or twice, what does it matter?! It matters simply because God did not tell Moses to strike the rock, - once, twice or any other amount of times! In Num. 20:8, he was told simply, speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

* Instead, he became so riled and so angry he hit that rock with such ferocity and 'fed-upness' ... when the Lord had given him no such instruction ... and he hit it with the same rod the Lord changed into a serpent before Pharaoh, and parted the Red Sea with, and that brought defeat over the Amalekites and this same rod that God so wondrously used in the defence of His people ... *Moses abused its use ... the use of the instrument of God!*

* Yes, indeed, the graciousness of God was still shown to His people, despite Moses' behaviour, - the Lord kept His promise and provided water for the Hebrews ... but God, nevertheless, judged Moses' disobedience and unbelief. God takes sin seriously, no matter whose it is.

* There is another application we must include here, if we are to understand the passage correctly. We need to understand the application from the point of view of Paul in I Cor. 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples ...

* Paul states here explicitly the rock Moses struck in Ex. 17:6 thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink referred to Christ, - He is our Rock from which we drink the living waters of salvation. Jesus explained this meaning to the woman of Samaria, Jn. 4:14 whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

* Paul made it clear, I Cor. 10:4 for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and *that Rock was Christ*.

* Let's settle here for a moment ... In Exodus 17:6 that rock that was struck *once* typified, - looked forward to, - the Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. ... Just as the rock that satisfied the thirst of God's people in the wilderness needed only to be struck once ... so also did *our* Rock need only to be struck *once* at Calvary.

* In Num. 20:11 Moses neither needed to strike the rock nor was instructed to strike the rock. Based upon what God had already done previously Moses only had to stand by it and speak and the rock would bring forth the water.

* You see, Christ was smitten for us ... and He only to be smitten once, - no need to be smitten twice or ever again, I Pet. 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

* It is blasphemy and arrogance to strike the rock over and over and over again! It is like saying the death of Christ never fully achieved the work God had intended for it. It is like saying we need to add to the plan of God's salvation. It is blasphemy and it is arrogance! The Rock, - our Saviour, - was struck only once to pay the price of our sin in full.

* And when the eternal Rock, - the Lord Jesus, - was struck by God on Calvary, the Living water of the Holy Spirit flowed freely and continues to flow. ... Christ smitten on the cross once ... never needing to be repeated! Once was altogether and completely sufficient.

* But instead of speaking to the rock Moses smote the rock and he missed out on the beautiful picture God was seeking to show him. ... He demonstrated *the sin of unbelief*, - just speak to the rock Moses, don't strike it this time ... but he wasn't listening for he reckoned he knew what to do himself!

* You see not only *the sin of unbelief* but you see also *the sin of pride*, Num. 20:12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. ...

* Prior to this Moses had been a meek humble man but v. 10 Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; *must we* fetch you water out of this rock? 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. He lost his temper. He took the credit for the miracle and refused to give the glory to God.

* But wait a moment, Moses, what did you say there? ... *must we* fetch you water out of this rock?

* Moses, you fetched *no water* out of the rock ... the water flowing from the rock was all due to the generosity of God, - it was not your doing whatsoever. *You* never brought the water out of the rock!

* Moses, if you stood from now until this time next year and you beat the rock as hard as you could as many times as you could ... you would not be able to make the water gush out of it ... Moses, you are taking credit for a work God did ... God brought the water from the rock!

* What is the warning? Here it is ... Watch you do not ever take upon yourself the glory that belongs to God alone.

* If He leads us to a lost soul and that soul comes to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ... it was God Who saved that person ... not me nor you ... and neither can or must we take any of the glory ... for we would only be setting out to rob God.

* The programmes and seminars, - well-meaning and ultra-organised as they might be, - cannot draw one single soul any closer into the Kingdom ... Only the Holy Spirit of God sovereignly can arrest the soul and irresistibly draw that soul into the redeemed Family of God!

* If the church building was to become too small it could not contain everyone who would want to enter through its doors ... it would not be your talents or mine ... but it would be God magnificently and wonderfully at work, - it would be all of His work and all to His glory!

* Sometimes we might be tempted to begin to think of ourselves too highly ... and before we fall into that trap, ...

* ... Remember Abraham when he thought himself to be so rich and powerful and influential ... and yet that was when he lied to the Egyptian Pharaoh about his wife.

* ... David was winning all his battles and the people were singing his praises ... but it was also at that time when he was scheming to get rid of Uriah because he wanted Uriah's adulterous wife.

* ... And Peter, the man who promised he would always be true to the Lord ... and yet when he was asked if he knew Jesus, ... *I know not this man of whom ye speak* (Mk. 14:71).

* *The sin of unbelief, and the sin of pride, and the sin of rebellion.* Num. 27:12 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. Moses allowed his personal feelings, - anger, - to come to the surface to cause his rebellion ... and in so doing he also contributed to the people's rebellion. His disobedience as a leader affected his people!

* Yes, we need to be careful for the Lord's sake and for the sake of His people because the devil would seek to use us to further *his* aims. ... If you love the Lord's Name, you will also work hard to love the Lord's people no matter how difficult you find it sometimes.

* Here is this old man, - 120 years of age. It reminds us too we need the Lord at the end of our lives as much as at the beginning ... you don't run a race and then slow down or give up half-ways through it, - you keep on going until you have finished the whole race.

* It does not matter how old you are, it does not mean you have reached perfection just yet! Age does not set you up on a pedestal. It does not give you any right to pontificate. Prov. 20:29 tells us *the beauty of old men is the grey head.* But *the grey head* alone does not make you perfect.

* The wisest of all kings, king Solomon wrote, Prov. 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: 4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil... 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongeth days.

- * It is obedience to the Lord that matters. ... Work not to be old, but work to be faithful to Him.
- * One act of disobedience cost Moses his entrance into the Promised Land ... be careful lest you mar your witness for God in a similar way!

CONCLUSION Moses teaches us so many wonderful lessons that come out of these verses, and the passages associated with them.

- * Despite the mistake he made, he was a wonderful servant of God. He, along with Elijah, had the marvellous privilege of being commissioned by the Father to speak with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and encourage Him for Calvary, - what a privilege God gave them both!

- * Before we leave these verses, don't you see the love and mercy of God even in His judgment upon Moses?

- * Yes, it is true the Lord did not permit Moses to enter the land of Canaan but, in grace, the Lord brought him into a greater land, - the Land of the Heavenly Canaan, Glory. ... God brought Moses to his *final home*.

- * Yes, Moses would have loved to enter Canaan, but God had another country far better, far brighter, and far more beautiful, Heb. 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.

- * Have you ever thought how much you would miss when you leave this scene of time?

- * All the wealthy people can be carried to their grave in the most ornate casket and with the greatest display ... but of what benefit is it to them?

- * No one knows where Moses is buried, except God ... and it does not even matter, for Moses is not there, ... he is in Heaven.

- * So what are *you* leaving behind you? What will they say about you? What is your witness? What is your testimony?

- * When he died the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days (Dt. 34:8). And the record bears witness, v.10 there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.

I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till Heaven I've found,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

- * God desires the best for His people. ... May His people desire the best for Him!