

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

Theme

God answers prayer in the way that is best for us

Object

A package of cookies to share

Scripture

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 (NIV)

Would you like a cookie? I think have enough for everyone to have one. I just love cookies! When you ask your mom if you can have a cookie, do you always get the same answer? Probably not. Sometimes the answer may be, "yes" and sometimes it may be "no." If you ask for a cookie and it is almost time to eat dinner, the answer might be, "not right now, it would spoil your dinner." You see, your mom wants what is best for you and when you ask for something, "yes" might not always be the answer that is best for you.

Did you know that same thing is true when we pray to God? Sometimes we ask God for something and He answers, "Yes" right away. Other times he may say, "No." There are also times when we ask God for something, and he says, "Not right now." The reason God doesn't always say, "yes" is that He wants what is best for his children -- and what we are asking for may not be what is best for us.

You may be surprised to learn that even some of God's most faithful servants sometimes got a "no" in answer to their prayers. The apostle Paul wrote about a time when God answered "no" to his prayer. In a letter he wrote to his friends in the church at Corinth, Paul told them that had a physical problem which he described as a "thorn in his flesh." We don't know exactly what it was because he didn't say, but it was something that Paul wanted God to take away. Paul said

that he begged God, not once, not twice, but three times to take away this "thorn in the flesh," but God said, "No, my grace is all you need."

Why would God say, "No" to Paul's request? Paul was convinced that it was to help him to be humble and to put his trust in Jesus rather than in his own strength. If he had been trusting in his own strength, he might not have been able to do nearly as much as he could when he was trusting in Jesus. "I am glad to boast that I am weak," said Paul, "so that the power of Christ may work through me."

God wants us to pray. He wants us to ask him for everything that we need, but we must remember that what we want may not always be what we need. God loves us and wants what is best for us. That is why when we pray and ask for something, the answer is sometimes "no."

Dear Father, we know that you love your children and want what is best for them. Help us to remember that when we ask for something and the answer is, "No." Amen.