

Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 12:8-9a

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”

GRACELIFE



CHURCH

*When God Says,
“No.”*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made

perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Context: Paul is *defending his apostleship*. In *Ch. 11* Paul speaks of the persecutions he faced. *Ch. 12* refers to a vision he had 14 years earlier (*vs. 1-6*), evidence of being an apostle. God knew the *intricate parts of his soul* and gave him a “**thorn**” to keep him humble.

A. 2 Cor. 12:7 - Purposeful Problems

1. Humility (2 Times)

“Thorn” can be translated, “stake...”

- What has God given to you that could make you prideful?***
- What has God given to you to make or keep you humble?***
- What do you do with what He has given to you to keep you humble?***

A. 2 Cor. 12:7 - Purposeful Problems

2. Messenger of Satan

“Messenger” is “*angelos*” in Gk. We get “*angel*” from it. “*Harass*” means, “to beat with the fists, be brutally treated, tormented” and refers to hurtful treatment from others... Satan was the *immediate cause*, but God had a **PURPOSE**.

B. 2 Cor. 12:8 - Passionate Prayer

1. Pleaded with the Lord

He sought the Lord and **pleaded** for healing.

“Pleaded,” can be translated, “to ask, beg, comfort, or encourage.”

Did Paul **blame God** for his suffering... Did he **acknowledge God** had *control over it* and *submitted himself* to His will...

B. 2 Cor. 12:8 - Passionate Prayer

2. “That it might depart or leave...”

The present tense of “*is sufficient*” in Greek, means His grace and strength are **constantly available** to and for us, to be able to **endure** – *1 Cor 15:10, Eph 3:20-21, Phil 4:13, Col 1:29*

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

1. God's Grace is Sufficient

Paul asked *God to heal him*. God can heal, miraculously or through doctors! Paul wanted this **GONE!** Nonetheless, Paul was willing to accept Gods answer...

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

2. God's Strength is Perfected in our Weakness

WHY? The strength we have during painful times is from **Him** and not ourselves! Paul listened to God and *didn't just tell Him what he wanted and then shut his ears!* ***God constantly shows us our weaknesses, but we just don't want to listen, because we don't want to be changed!***

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

Why does God says "No?"

1. To show others and us if we **truly believe** *God is sovereign and providential.*
2. To show others and us if we have an **eternal perspective**, rather than an *immediate.*
3. To **mature** us and **make us holy.**
4. To make us **depend** on Him more.

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

5. To *keep us humble* because He give grace to the humble and has to help us be and stay humble.

6. To help us *relate to others in pain*.

7. To get us to *pray* and *get into the Word*.

8. To *challenge* us not to just want to *get out of consequences of our sins*.

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

9. To remind us *He has something better in the future*, but we must be patient.

10. To show His *love for us* and what *would happen* if He said, "Yes."

11. To *protect* us!

12. To *teach* us something about *who* He is.

13. To *get our attention!*

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

3. Boast in Infirmities

Paul praised God for his problem! Why?

Because he *recognized that in those problems, he was weak. He couldn't do anything about the problem, whatever or whomever it was.*

Because of that, he had to **rest in the power of Christ**, *the only One greater than every problem he faced...*

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

4. Power of Christ

He is *thankful for reality/truth*, knowing God has a **reason** and **purpose** for his *thorn*.

Paul's *not happy he's hurting...*

But he is happy that **God is honored** in his *weakness* because it *shows His grace and strength is what we live our lives by...*

C. 2 Cor. 12:9 - Powerful Powerlessness

4. Power of Christ

Paul *rejoiced in weakness* that the **power of Christ** would rest upon him...

The weaker we are, the more God's power shines forth through us, like a beacon! The weaker we realize we are, the greater God's power, love, and grace are poured into us and flows out to others...

D. 2 Cor. 12:10 - Pleasure in Problems

1. Take Pleasure in... for Christ's Sake

Why? So, the power of Jesus might be “*manifested*” in his life to show others the ***power is of God and not from him***. His *helplessness would glorify God*. **We don't think this way!** Paul refers to the list in 11:22-33 and sums it up in this verse to show he is called by God to be an apostle for God's glory.

D. 2 Cor. 12:10 - Pleasure in Problems

2. When We are Weak, We are Strong

“God creates out of *nothing*. Therefore, until man is *nothing*, God can make *nothing* out of him.” Martin Luther.

The more Paul suffered, the more God enabled him to achieve by **His grace**. For us to be strong, we must be weak...

D. 2 Cor. 12:10 - Pleasure in Problems

3. Accepting God's "No"

Why don't we want to hear "No" from God...

Much of our pain and sorrow comes from not accepting nor being satisfied with what is given to us by God!

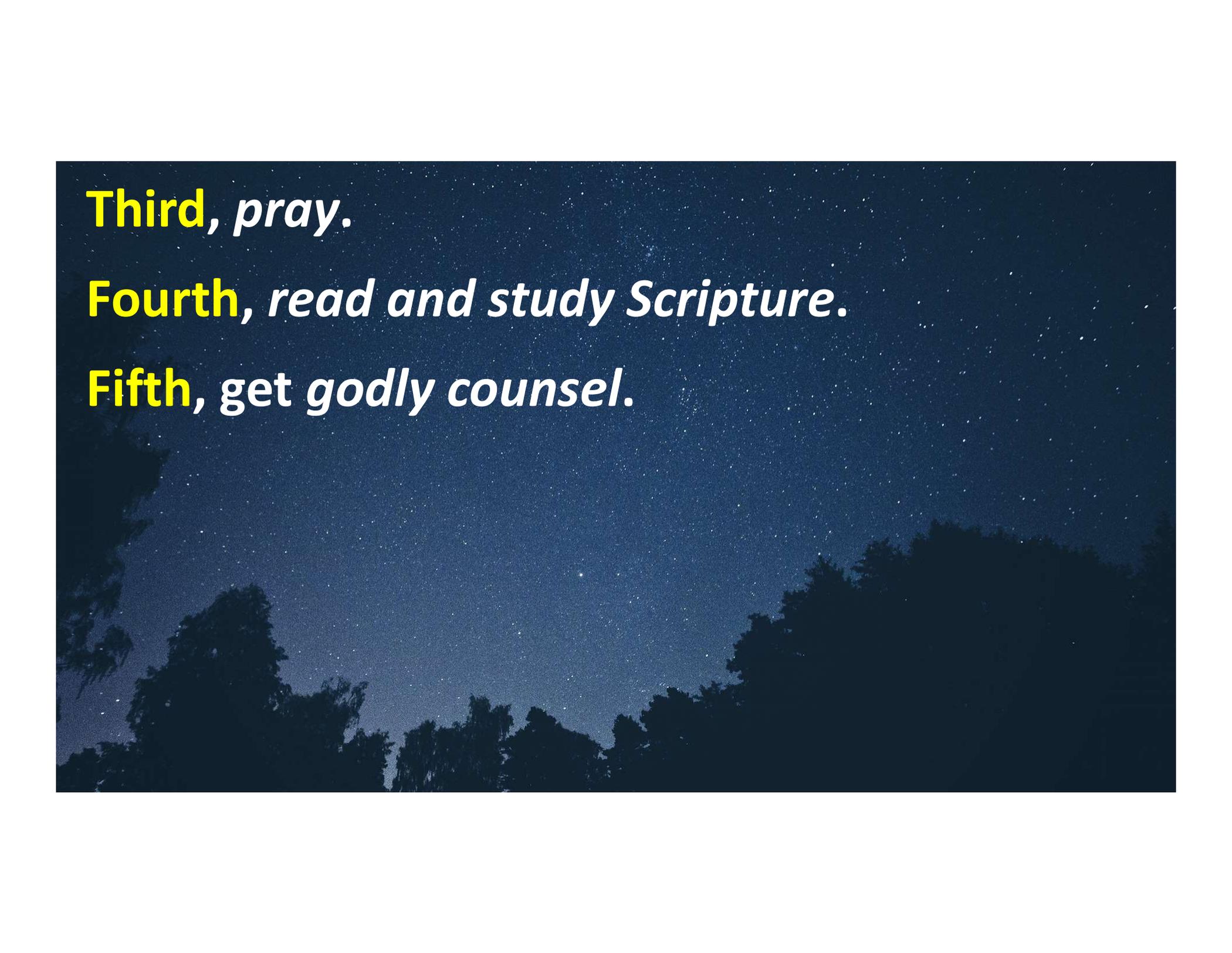
How do I *know if God is saying*, “No” or “Yes?”

Some things are clear in Scripture, regarding the Christian life.

First, God works on us as **individuals**. What may be a **mild obstacle** to one, may be “**no**” to another and vice versa.

Second, ask *questions*:

1. Has God truly led me to do this?
2. Will it glorify Him?
3. Is it holy?
4. Am I doing this in faith & not presumption?
5. Will this draw me closer to the goal (given by God)?
6. Will it benefit others?
7. Will it draw me closer to the Lord?



Third, pray.

Fourth, read and study Scripture.

Fifth, get godly counsel.