

# **WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'**

And Other Radio Addresses

by  
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## **CHAPTER ONE WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'**

GOD'S "NO," in answer to prayer, means, "Something better." That is the happy secret I have discovered after being denied one of the most earnest desires of my whole life.

"O my Father!" I cried that afternoon in 1929 at Santa Rosa, California, "I plead with Thee! Hear my prayer now! Now!"

I was alone in my parked car on a quiet country road several miles from town. It was the rainy season and on either side of the road the ditches were full. Frogs piped their lonely melodies, songs I ordinarily loved to hear, but today they only intensified my despair and loneliness. Rain clouds hid the sun which was already low in the west.

Today, I thought, now, this moment, GOD will heal me.

He must heal me! I was scheduled to conduct a union evangelistic mission in a Colorado town. Nearly one thousand persons had been born into the Kingdom of GOD under my ministry the year before. As many more might be saved in each succeeding year of my life, if GOD allowed me to continue in the work for which He had trained me - and in which I had been so happy.

But tuberculosis is no respecter of persons. I was already an advanced case.

Only GOD could come to the rescue. He must intervene or I would die, I thought. Surely He needed me on earth far more than in heaven; and He needed me now, not after I had "chased the cure" for years.

My yearning was little short of agony as I cried out in prayer, my hands gripping the steering wheel desperately. "Now, O GOD! Now! I ask Thee. I expect Thee to heal me. I take . . ." Yes, I tried to take by faith - or what I hoped was faith - health from GOD. I sobbed brokenly. My soul reached up, like a baby bird with open mouth toward Him Whom I loved, waiting for Him to drop from Heaven the answer I needed.

"This moment! Souls are dying without CHRIST! Please, GOD! For JESUS' sake!"

Had He not said, "**If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us**"? Surely it was His will for me to be well! It was the supreme desire of my life. If He did not answer today, a telegram would have to be sent, canceling my engagement. There was also the problem of providing for my wife and for the new baby which was to arrive in a few months.

The frogs in the pond on either side of the road continued their metallic pipings, gray clouds scudded low across the sky, with not one ray of sunshine straying through. For me there was no music, no light from the silent, murky heavens. In my mind there was ringing the seemingly cruel answer, "No, no, no!"

I am sure GOD must have said it gently, but at that time it seemed as if I had prayed to an impersonal, intangible Being Who did not care - Who could not care - He with Whom I had communed and Whom I had known and loved so many years.

I drove back to the city, discouraged and lonely, defeated.

Days, weeks, months passed, during which time I continued in an attitude of expectancy, hoping, praying, trying to believe not knowing it is a better, purer faith that asks and trusts the living GOD to do what is right, than that which insists upon an answer which may be out of harmony with His will and purpose.

It is not unbelief to take "No" for an answer; to say, "**Not my will, but Thine, be done.**" The Saviour Himself prayed those words when He agonized that dark night in Gethsemane's garden. Such praying on our part, it seems to me, is faith indeed. Faith in His goodness, in His daily watch-care, in His plan for our lives, in Himself. His "No" that day and His continued "No" through the years has meant, "I have something better for you, My child; for you and for others."

In 1929 my parish was local, wherever I chanced to be. Today it is the world. Not hundreds of people; not thousands, nor yet hundreds of thousands. But millions! More than 200,000 copies of my stories are now in circulation throughout the world - stories which would never have been written had the answer to my prayer been "Yes."

For it has been during my battle with tuberculosis that I have discovered and developed the talent for writing. Many of my published novels have been broadcast serially over one of America's large radio stations, reaching potentially millions. Thousands of letters have come telling of blessings received, of Christians being strengthened, of young people surrendering their lives to CHRIST.

My own life is rich and full. While it is true, my health is now greatly improved, it has been at the cost of ten years of semi-invalidism, suffering, a total of three and one-half years in bed and a number of operations - one of them a triple major operation involving the removal of a number of ribs and the permanent collapse of one lung.

The fruit of that cost is a mind enriched by voluminous reading, prayer and fellowship and deeper appreciation of GOD's presence in times of testing, a deeper love for my family and a world-wide parish; yes, and the continuous satisfaction of knowing that many are coming to JESUS CHRIST, through Whom alone they can be saved.

I know this: That the highway of triumph is often the low way of tribulation.

Handicaps come in handy when they pass the censorship of Romans 8:28.

If blind Milton could write *Paradise Lost*, if John Bunyan in Bedford jail could write *Pilgrim's Progress*, if Luther imprisoned in Wartburg castle could translate the entire New Testament into the German language, if Robert Louis Stevenson, tubercular, suffering with sciatica, one arm in a sling, sentenced to absolute silence and darkness, could produce *The Child's Garden of Verses*, if Paul, confined to a Roman prison and chained to a guard twenty-four hours a day, could still proclaim the gospel - if these men under such mighty handicaps could and did dare to make progress and history, why should not we?

For the soul there need be no prison walls, no binding chains, no smiting blindness.

There are men who have learned not to bemoan their troubles or to waste them, but to make slaves of them - men who have learned to use every stumbling stone as material for building a great life.

Someone has said, "A pessimist is one who sees the difficulty in the opportunity; while an optimist sees the opportunity in the difficulty."

I am sure that my time of being laid aside was not a mere detour, but the real highway of my life. At any rate there are more flowers along the roadsides of detours than along the main highways. And travel is so fast - too fast - on the main roads. Let us go on. The goal is just ahead, and let us gather the flowers of patience, growth, friendship, faith and love as we go, not forgetting that, "**Lo, I am with you always.**"

It is better to experience with the Apostle Paul, "**My grace is sufficient for thee,**" than it is to have the thorn removed - if the thorn is needed for the out-working of the purpose of GOD in your life.

It is said that GOD has but three answers to the prayer of petition: "Yes;" "No;" or "Wait a while."

May I presume to interpret the "No" to mean, "I have something better for you, if you will wait?"

It has been better for me: I am richer in spiritual experience. It has been better for others.

**"My grace is sufficient for thee."**

**"Not my will, but Thine, be done."**

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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