



When He Says "No"

I HAD DONE EVERYTHING I COULD in myself: practice, prayer, more practice, more prayer, taken every available pill for my chronic throat problem. My heart and motives were right-aligned: everything for His glory and the edification of His church.

...and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

1 John 3:22

Yet, come Sunday morning, once the accompaniment was cued and I began to sing, immediately my throat was obstructed by the persistent crud I had prayed so earnestly for the Lord to re-

move. He could have easily, of course, kept my throat clear for the few minutes of the song. After all, if "all things are possible with God," then this small thing He could do without batting an eyelash.

**The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He will also hear their cry and will save them.**

Psalms 145:18-19

But He didn't do it.
He said, "No."



Like so many, my first response was, *Why?* Didn't God *want* the message of the song to be delivered without distraction? There had been no pride, no ego simmering in my heart, for which it might have been necessary for Him to wield His trusty two-by-four upside my head (as my attentive Parent has so many times before). I could think of no earthly reason for—

Ahem.

But that's the point, isn't it. Perhaps there was no *earthly* reason, but surely God had His *heavenly* reason for answering my prayers in the negative.

Here is the perennial conflict between the temporal and the eternal. We see what is happening now, while God sees what He will have happen tomorrow. We see now and perhaps a few years back, while God both sees and *dwells* from before the beginning of time to beyond the end of time. We see in a straight line, while God sees what lies around the bend in the road.

I saw the span of four minutes on a Sunday morning, while God sees what He will do with those four minutes in the future. And, after all, what is one individual's embarrassment compared to a useful tool in the Lord's hands?

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him

from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:19b-23

And even trying to imagine what He will do with those four minutes is almost as bad as my pique over what He didn't.



It takes a while to wean ourselves off the philosophies of this age—usually a lifetime. We are born, every one of us, with a proclivity toward wanting things to go our way. And it is too easy for the believer to expect the Lord God to bow to *his* shortsighted logic regarding even service in His name.

But while we enjoy the privilege of calling Him "Lord," there must come a day when we accept the hard truth that He really is.