

NOT BIGGER THAN GOD

- A. Introduction: There is no such thing as a problem-free life for anybody because we all live in sin damaged world. Every one of us must face trials and hardships because that is the nature of life in a fallen world. Since we can't avoid life's challenges, it's vitally important that we learn how to deal with them.
1. For a number of weeks we have been focusing on the fact that God's promise to His people is peace of mind in the midst of the tribulations of life. John 16:33
 - a. This peace comes to us through the Word of God. The Bible shows us what God is like and how He works in and with life's hardships. This information encourages us and brings us peace of mind.
 - b. Peace comes from knowing that God is with us. Therefore, we do not have to fear, we can have peace of mind because nothing can come against us that is bigger than God who is with us.
 2. The statement that nothing can come against us that is bigger than God is another way of saying: Nothing is too hard for God and nothing is impossible for Him.
 - a. It means that there is no situation or circumstance that is unfixable for God. Nothing is too hard for the Lord to accomplish or overcome.
 - b. In this lesson we're going to talk about what the fact that nothing can come against us that is bigger than God who is with us looks like in a fallen world.
- B. These statements (nothing is too hard for God and nothing is impossible for Him) are found a number of times in the Bible. Let's look at some examples to get an idea of what they mean.
1. The first time the statement that nothing is too hard for God appears in the Bible is in Gen 18:14—"Is anything too hard for the Lord". This is also the first place the word "hard" appears in Scripture.
 - a. The Hebrew word translated *hard* means to do something wonderful, extraordinary, or difficult.
 1. Too wonderful (YLT); too marvelous (NAB); too hard or wondrous (Amp); Is there any wonder which the Lord is not able to do (Basic).
 2. The word often signifies the wondrous works of God such as those He did in Egypt (Ex 3:20; Ps 106:22; Micah 7:15). The point for us is that these are demonstrations of God's supernatural power on behalf of His people.
 - b. When we read the context of the statement we see that it is the Lord Himself Who asked the question: Is anything too hard for Me? The statement is a rhetorical question asked for effect because the answer is obvious. Let's examine what's going on in this situation.
 1. When Abraham was 75 years old and his wife Sarah was 65 (note that they were old and childless) God promised them that a son would be born to them. Gen 15:4
 2. Gen 17:15-21—Twenty-five years later (the couple is still childless) God told Abraham that Sarah would bear a child in the next year. Abraham actually laughed because it was ridiculous. That's crazy talk. They were both too old and couldn't produce children when they were young. This is impossible, according to everything they knew.
 1. Gen 18:1—Not long after this, the Lord (Preincarnate Jesus) visited Abraham. The Lord repeated His statement that "this time next year, I will return and...Sarah will have a son" (v10, NLT).
 2. Sarah overheard the conversation and laughed to herself. "How can a worn-out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is also so old (v12—NLT). That's crazy talk.
 3. The Lord heard knew that she laughed because it was ridiculous and answered her with a question: Is anything too hard for Me (v14)? In other words, this isn't bigger than Me. True to His Word, the Lord as He promised and she conceived and bore a son. Gen 21:1-3
 - c. God made a number of seemingly impossible promises to Abraham (lessons for another day). But God revealed Himself to Abraham and Sarah through His Word to inspire trust or faith in them that nothing was too big (impossible or difficult) for him. Let's back up just a bit.

1. Gen 17:1—When the Lord appeared to Abraham to tell him (among other things) that Sarah would have a child in the following year, God referred to Himself as the Almighty God. God’s names are revelations of His character and attributes (lessons for another day).
2. The name Almighty God is significant. Almighty means having absolute, unlimited power over all (*Webster’s Dictionary*). Almighty God in the original Hebrew is El Shaddai.
 - A. El meant the strong or powerful one. El is a generic name for god or a god in Hebrew as well as other languages of that region at that time. That’s why we see statements such as “There is no god (el) like our God (El)” in many places in the Old Testament.
 - B. Pairing El with Shaddai intensifies the thought of power or strength inherent in the name El because Shaddai means almighty. It comes from a root word that means to be strong or powerful. The idea is that there is no one or no thing that is more powerful than God who is Shaddai. There is nothing bigger than Me. Therefore, nothing is too hard or impossible for me.
3. God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name of God Almighty or El Shaddai. Even Joseph knew Him by that name. Gen 28:1-3; Gen 35:11; Gen 43:14; Gen 48:3; Ex 6:3
2. The statement that nothing is too hard for God is found twice in Jeremiah 32 (v17 and v27). Jeremiah uttered those words one time and then the Lord repeated this statement.
 - a. We need the historical context. When God brought Israel into Canaan to settle (around 1451 BC) the Lord warned them that if they worshipped the gods of the people living around them, they would be removed from the land.
 1. Israel repeatedly abandoned Almighty God to worship false gods. God sent numerous prophets to His people (including Jeremiah) to call them back to Him and warn them of impending destruction if they did not return to Him.
 2. Israel did not listen to the prophets and in 586 BC Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. All but the poorest people were taken away as captives to Babylon where they remained for 70 years,
 - A. Jeremiah was an eleventh hour prophet. When his ministry began, it was too late to stop the Babylonians from conquering them. Jeremiah was commissioned by God to tell Israel that the only way to avoid complete destruction of their nation was to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and become his subjects. Jeremiah’s message was very unpopular.
 - B. When this incident in Jeremiah 32 occurred, it was one year before destruction (587 BC), Jeremiah was in prison (thanks to King Zedekiah of Judah), and Jerusalem was under siege, suffering famine and disease. v1-5
 - b. The Lord spoke to Jeremiah and told him to buy land from his cousin in the land of Benjamin because, according to the Lord, people would someday own property again in the land and live normal lives. v6-15
 1. Once the land was purchased and the deed sealed, Jeremiah prayed a prayer to God (v16-25). In his prayer he made the statement that nothing is too hard for God (same word as Gen 18:14). v17—There is nothing you are not able to do (Basic); nothing is impossible with you (NAB).
 2. What God told Jeremiah seemed impossible, that His people would one day live in the land again after its complete destruction and their removal from the land. But Jeremiah proclaimed: This isn’t bigger than you.
 - A. Note that in his prayer Jeremiah recounted the bigness of God: You made heaven and earth by your power. You are loving and kind. You are all mighty (all powerful). You have all wisdom. You do great and mighty wonders in Egypt (Ex 3:20).
 - B. What I see is bad and it’s big and it’s going to get worse before it gets better. Yet I choose Your Word. There is hope in a hopeless situation because it isn’t bigger than You.
 - c. God spoke to him once more: v26—The Lord poses the rhetorical question: Is anything too hard for Me? In other words, the Lord says to the prophet: That’s right Jeremiah. Nothing is

impossible for Me. Nothing is too difficult for Me. The Lord then recounted what was about to happen to Israel and then described the restoration that will one day come.

1. Jeremiah could have prayed like this: I'm in jail. No one likes me. I've been beaten more times than I can count. No one listens to me. People think I'm a traitor. My life is going to be altered by this catastrophe that I did not cause. I've done no wrong. I won't live to see the great day of return to the land. Had he done so, it would have troubled his heart. John 14:27
2. Jeremiah was neither fearful nor bitter in the face of real catastrophe because he knew that there is more to life than just this life.
 - A. This is a lesson for another day, but he understood that there is a life to come and that the ultimate stage for the reversals of life's hardships and pain is ahead.
 - B. He was able to bring peace to his soul because he understood that all loss and all injustices will be reversed either in this life or the life to come because nothing is bigger than God. Rom 8:18; Heb 11:32-40

C. Let's go to Matt 6. It's going to seem like we are changing subjects, but we aren't. Stick with me. In v25, Jesus told His followers not to worry over where we'll get the necessities of life.

1. Worry or anxiety is a form of fear. It is defined as uneasiness of mind (in other words, lack of peace) usually over an impending or anticipated ill. To be anxious means to be fearful over what may or may not happen (*Webster's Dictionary*).
 - a. When Jesus said "Don't worry" He didn't mean "Don't feel certain emotions" when you face life's challenges. It means don't trouble or agitate your soul by feeding them.
 1. Emotions are stimulated by what we see around us. If you see lack you will feel anxious. That's just the way we're wired. These feelings are accompanied by anxious, troubling thoughts—What am I going to do? How will I survive?
 2. Take no thought comes from a Greek word that means to disunite. It has the idea of distraction. These thoughts and emotions draw our attention away from the way things really are. The Creator of all is our heavenly Father. And He loves us and cares for His creation.
 - b. Jesus told His followers: When you see lack (or an impending ill) and feel the anxiety it produces, don't focus on: What will we eat or wear. Put your focus on God and His faithful loving care of His creation. Look at God's care of His birds and flowers and remember that you matter to Him more than they do. v26-31
 1. We say yes and amen to this when we're sitting in church listening to this being preached. But in real life, when you have real needs and seemingly no options, this is crazy talk, meaning that it seems ridiculous to our mind. It doesn't necessarily make sense to our minds.
 2. Focusing on—What will I eat? What will I drink? Where will I get clothes?—seems much more reasonable to focus on. It makes more sense to put your mind on those things.
 - A. If you can fix things through focusing on them, then do so. If not, focus on the One who is bigger than all of it and can fix things. It will bring peace to your soul.
 - B. Jesus said: Don't focus on things you can't do anything about (v27). Focus on what God Who is big can do.
2. Paul said that when you are worried, you keep your focus on God through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Phil 4:6-7.
 - a. In other words, you go to God and, like Jeremiah, acknowledge His bigness. I don't know what to do. But You do, Lord. I can't fix this Lord, but you can.
 - b. Thanksgiving or gratefulness comes from knowing that, in the face of lack or impending trouble, you have what you need because you have God with you and nothing can come against you that is bigger than God.
 - c. Notice, this passage doesn't say that when you go to God your circumstances will immediately change and the problem will go away. It says the peace that passes understanding will come to you.

1. Understanding is a noun that means the mind, the intellect, the seat of understanding. v7
—Peace which transcends all our powers of thought (Weymouth).
 2. The peace that passes understanding sounds so wonderful in a sermon. But you must understand that in real life, the peace that passes understanding is ridiculous to our mind. When, according to sight, feeling, and reason you should become hysterical and fall apart—yet you are able to boldly and truthfully proclaim: This isn't bigger than God, therefore, it is well with my soul—that's crazy talk.
 - A. For 100 year old Abraham and 90 year old Sarah to proclaim: We're going to have a child because you are bigger than barrenness and old age—that's ridiculous. That's crazy talk.
 - B. For Jeremiah to say: The complete destruction of life and civilization as I know it is not bigger than you—that's ridiculous. That's crazy talk.
 - d. However, it's not crazy talk. It's the way things really are according to God. He can make a way where there is no way because nothing is bigger than Him. Nothing is impossible, nothing is too hard for Him. He is God Almighty.
 - e. This is what the peace that passes understanding looks like. It's not a technique to solve your problem. It comes out of your view of reality. God is real. He is with me. And He is big.
 3. The problem is that, in the face of trouble, we all naturally fixate on how it's going to get fixed instead of on the bigness of God.
 - a. We occupy our mind with: Why did this happen? What's wrong with me? What's wrong with you? How is God going to fix it? How can I fix it? Instead, we should focus on: Nothing is impossible for God (it's not bigger than Him). It is well with my soul (It's all good; praise the Lord).
 - b. The Bible gives example after example of big problems that weren't bigger than God. He had a solution and was able to bring deliverance. Barren women gave birth to children. Incurable diseases and irreversible physical conditions were cured. Deadly storms stilled. Overwhelming enemy forces were defeated. Death was reversed. Lack was reversed. But everybody's deliverance looked different.
 1. A deadly storm was calmed (Mark 4:35-41). In another case, the ship was wrecked, but everyone's life was saved (Acts 27).
 2. Healing came to bodies in numerous ways: washing in the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-7); Jesus stretching out His hand (Matt 8:1-3); picking up a bed and walking away (Matt 9:1-6); touching the hem of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:25-34).
 3. Provision came through fish and loaves being multiplied (Matt 14:13-21); manna appearing on the ground (Ex 16:14-15); ravens delivered bread and meat (I Kings 17:1-6); water turned into wine (John 2:1-11); bitter water became drinkable (EX 15:23-26); water flowed out of a rock (Ex 17:1-7); a coin was found in a fish's mouth (Matt 17:27) fishing where no fish could be found previously (Luke 5:1-6).
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. But consider one thought as we close. If there is something you can figure out and address, then do so. If not, focus on the bigness of God and let the peace that passes understanding rule in your heart. Col 3:15