

So far in our study, our focus was on theological issues that face us when trusting God's words. Our last lesson focused on the character of God, the foundation of his trustworthy words. We should simply believe God because of who he is.

Our lessons now focus on some passages that reinforce the trustworthiness of God's words by three instances where we are told "nothing is too hard for God." These instances reinforce the doctrine that all of God's words are trustworthy.

Introduction:

Things God cannot do:

- Evil (Jer 9.24, Jas 1.13)
- Tempt to evil (Jas 1.13)
- Deny Himself (2 Tim 2.13)
- Lie (Num 23.19, 1 Sa 15.29, Titus 1.2, Heb 6.18)
- Fail to do His own word (Isa 55.1)

Omnipotence doesn't mean, "God can do anything." It really means, God can do anything consistent with his holy character. God's character prevents Him from doing some things and requires Him to do other things.

Since God's power is limited only by His character, he is always trustworthy: he will always do what he says he will do. God is reliable.

Three Impossible Passages:

Genesis 18, Jeremiah 32, Luke 1

In each passage we will find the rhetorical question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (or variations)

Gn 18.14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Anything = "any word" — can be translated generically, "anything," but "if you simply poke around in the passage a little, you discover that the 'thing' in view is something that was said." [152]

Too hard (too difficult, NAU) = "too wonderful" — usual meaning of the Hebrew word (syn. marvelous, miraculous, impossible, unusual)

The bottom-line question: Is God's word too good to be true?

Sarah will have a son (Gen 18.14)

The context:

The Lord appeared before Abram with two angels. Abram hurried to prepare a meal for them, which they ate while Abram stood by.

Gen 18.9-14

- Sarah your wife will have a son (10)
- Sarah laughed within herself (12)
- The Lord said, "Why did Sarah laugh?" (13)
- The Lord said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (14)

This is the 12th time over a period of twenty-five years that God made this promise:

Gen 12.1-3, 12.7, 13.15-16, 15.4-5, 13, 18, 17.7-8, 16, 19, 21, 18.10, 14.

- The earlier promises do not specify a son, but imply it (can't have a multitude of descendants without a son)
- The earlier promises do not mention Sarah but assume it. After the Ishmael incident, from 17.16 on, Sarah is the focus.
- This event is thirteen years after Ishmael's birth (Gen 17.23)
- Abraham is 99, Sarah is 89 when God makes this promise in Gen 18; Sarah has gone through menopause

"God purposely waited for the obstacles to mount up until it was impossible." [151] God wanted "to bring the promise to the brink of failure ... to demonstrate that the promise, when fulfilled, came from God alone."

Conclusion:

Three chapters and nine months later, what happened?

Gn 21.1-2 ¶ Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. 2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

God can do anything, yes, within the limits of his character.

But even more, God can do anything he says he will do.

How did Sarah conceive?

Heb 11.11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

“Her faith was not merely in God’s omnipotence (that he could do this); her faith was in God’s faithfulness to His words (that he would do this because He promised to).” [154]

Jeremiah, buy a field (Jer 32)

Context:

It is the tenth year of Zedekiah’s reign, the eighteenth of Nebuchadnezzar, the year of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah is under house arrest in the King’s court (Jer 32.1-2)

Note: Jerusalem will fall in a few months, the people will mostly all be slain or deported to Babylon.

God told Jeremiah to buy a field from his cousin, Hanamel, and register the deed according to Jewish practice (Jer 32.6-15), as an act of faith in God’s promise to restore the Jews to the land.

Jeremiah prays, beginning with Jer 32.17:

Jer 32.17 ‘Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,

- Creation (17)
- Judgement (18-19)
- Exodus (20-21)
- Conquest (22-23)
- Babylonian siege (24)
- And now you tell me to buy a field (25)

God's declaration:

Jer 32.27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?"

Jer 32.17 — "is any WORD too Wonderful?"

Jer 32.27 — "is any WORD too Wonderful?"

Mentions of God's word in Jer 32:

32.1, 6, 8 (twice), 17, 24, 26, 27, 42

Jer 32.42 ¶ "For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.

Now look at Ezra 1.1-3:

Ez 1.1-3 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying: 2 ¶ "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.

God's power brought Judah back to the land, it is true, but the point is, What God says is reliable.

God does the impossible in keeping with His own promises.