

Mission Possible: When God Does the Impossible

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[0:00] Thank you all. Thank you for your prayers, Gerald. Thank you for your music.! These final chapters of Acts all focus on two key themes. One, the gospel being preached through the Roman system via different rulers, which leads us to the second, the journey to Rome, and eventually preaching in Rome.

And a rather good bundle of verses to summarize it all up is there in Acts 23. Verse 9. And everything that happens in the last few chapters of Luke's books are all pivotably found centered in what this says here. Because from verse 9 it says, there was a great uproar. And some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. We find nothing wrong with this man, they said. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him? The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them.

[2:26] He ordered the troops to go down and take him away by force and to bring him back into the barracks. The following night, the Lord stood near Paul and said, Take courage.

As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify about me in Rome. Bang! Bang! The gospel going through the channels of Rome and getting to Rome. Everything these next handful of chapters are all about.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you have made everything so clear of how you built your church on earth.

And even the bits where we might think best leave them out. No, they're there, clear, to help us understand your love and mercy to us.

[3:44] And Lord, thank you that we get to see the excitement of the adventure of the actions that acts, details and brings us into it.

Help us never forget the joy and the love and the happiness and the excitement of this book. And guide us forward now, Lord, continuously to hear from you.

In your name, Jesus. Amen. Amen. So, doing the impossible or doing an impossible mission. Ever decided not to proceed with a, I don't know, a job or an exam, a task, an adventure, simply because from where you stand, from where you view it, it simply looks downright impossible. It's impossible to do, to achieve, or succeed in. So, you have just not even tried because it looks impossible.

[5:20] I suppose if it's impossible, then it's impossible. You know, there's no point in even trying, is there?

Well, thank goodness Tom Cruise isn't here right now. For if there's one thing he has spent the last 30 years, since 1996, telling us all, it's that one can do impossible missions.

His character, Ethan Hunt, even leads the so-called IMF, the impossible mission force.

I'm personally more of a Jason Bourne fan. But whatever one of these you watch, Bourne, Hunt, Bond, at the centre, is an extremely impossible mission being done.

So, actually, in a complete reversal from where I started, I'm now saying anything is possible.

[6:44] And I mean, like, we don't need Hollywood to tell us that. The Bible is cram-packed, filled with God doing the impossible through his followers, me and you.

There is many, many accounts. One being here in Acts 23. Paul.

Had obeyed the Lord. And walked right into his arrest. Though it seems to have all went very, very wrong.

The plan was, Paul would be taken. He would be dragged through the courts and rulers of the lands.

And in doing so, he would use every opportunity to preach the good news. And every court, every king, every ruler would be told the exact same thing.

[8:05] The words may have changed and been a little bit different here and there. But the same thing came out. The one true God of heaven loves you.

And then finally, he would do it in Rome. The single highest authority of the then known world. And once the good news is proclaimed in the courts of Caesar, job done.

But when we then read words like, the dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them.

And so he orders his troops to go and get Paul and bring him back into the barracks. When you read that, then one very understandably may assume the mission plan is impossible.

[9:10] This guy is never getting to Rome. This truly is the meaning of mission impossible. And it would appear Paul himself began to possibly consider, this isn't going to work out.

It's now likely I'll never, I'll never preach to the rulers. Never mind Rome. I'll be dead soon. The crowds are waiting, I said, the barracks for him.

People are making plans to have him dead. He's in the hands of the Romans. That's it. I'll be dead soon. Hence why the Lord stood near Paul the following night and said, Take courage.

Take courage. A well-known phrase of Jesus. Remember? Just one example is the storm.

Jesus' disciples had sailed out across a lake. Jesus was praying in the mountains when a storm broke out and the storm hit the lake.

[10:37] It terrified the disciples. It terrified the disciples. And so Jesus himself comes to their ear. And to do so, he simply, amazingly, miraculously walks out onto the water.

Walks across and through the storm. To the boat. Causing the disciples to panic.

Panic a little more. They think it's a ghost. And so Jesus says, Take courage. Don't be afraid.

It's me. It's Jesus. He orders the storm to cease. All is calm.

And so within Jesus' words, Take courage. He also does the apparent impossible.

[11:44] And ends the storm. As impossible as it may sound. To us, He, Jesus, commands wind to be calm, waves to cease, and they obey.

And so back here, in Acts, the following night, the Lord stood near Paul and said, Take courage. Jesus himself stands near Paul and seeing what we can only assume was worry, was doubt, was concern.

He says, Take courage. Just like with the twelve. And then, and then, He says, As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.

I.E., don't lose hope. Don't give up. I told you that I would use you to take the good news right through the Gentile world, right to the highest authority, and that is still happening, Paul.

[13:15] Yes, Jesus is saying, from here in the barracks, with mobs waiting to kill you, it looks impossible. Yes, by human understanding, it is impossible.

But I, Jesus, am God, and I, Jesus, do the impossible, and just as I once enabled Moses to part the sea, Joseph to rule Egypt, David to defeat Goliath, turn water into wine, enabled miraculous catches of fish, healed leprosy, made the lame walk, raised the dead, came back to life myself, turned 11 guys into a multi-national church, just as I, Jesus, did all that, all those impossible works, so I will also take you, Paul, to testify about me in Rome.

Jesus does the impossible. Jesus is the real and the only impossible mission force.

And so Paul was able to indeed take courage, to keep focused on the job, keep focused on his calling, knowing that the mission would indeed be fulfilled.

And Jesus is still saying to you and me, to us all, I still do the impossible. He's still saying to us all, I do the impossible.

[15:10] So, what's going on in your life that simply seems impossible to fix, to conquer, to deal with?

a temptation, an addiction, a secret temptation, a secret addiction, that you don't tell your spouse about?

Or maybe, maybe more a work issue, a bully, an older person taking advantage, or maybe something else again, death, illness, depression, whatever it may be, from whatever category, does it really look impossible to deal with?

Well, the good news is the same Lord Jesus who stood near Paul that night saying, take courage, I will do this.

The so-called impossible mission, Paul, I will do it. That same Lord Jesus is still at work today, and he can and does still do the impossible in our lives today.

[16:53] And maybe you're thinking, how exactly and when exactly I've faced this problem.

I've dealt with that temptation for years. It's a big wall around my life. It's caging me in.

I can't get over it. I can't knock it down. Well, let's take some encouragement from Hezekiah.

Who? King Hezekiah? Who was once king of Judah? He was the one who instigated a lot of the religious and civil reforms.

Christians. And he also had a deep personal relationship with God. He had a model prayer life.

[17:59] And here's how the Bible describes him. Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel.

There was no one like him among the kings of Judah. either before him or after him. He held fast to the Lord and nothing stopped him following God.

Now, that's the sort of disciple we want to be, isn't it? That's the sort of disciple we should all be aspiring for, isn't it?

And so it's worth taking that advice from him. And if you find yourself here today thinking, look, I've done that.

I've made Jesus my foundation. I've given him my full trust. I do believe and I still can't seem to get through my storm.

[19:07] or you feel this battle of mine, this temptation, this addiction, secret or known or whatever it is, it just seems to keep coming.

This debt just keeps building. This illness never gives a break. Whatever it may be, it just keeps going and it looks impossible. In fact, it looks like it's winning.

Well, be encouraged. Keep going strong. Don't give up.

Keep focused on Jesus as your foundation for he will end your storm. And to do so, take a leaf out of Hezekiah's book.

Take a leaf out of Hezekiah's book. Hezekiah was busy serving the Lord. When bang, the storm comes.

[20:25] Threats, warnings, blackmails. He is told by those in opposition to God, God, that they will destroy him and destroy everything he loves.

This goes on for what seems like a never ending age, to the point where Hezekiah is now thinking, this will never end for me.

Eventually, the leaders of the opposition write it all down. It's a big letter. It's a big scroll and they give it to Hezekiah.

They give it to him. Now, what was, what is Hezekiah's means of defense? What was his foundation? God?

And by the time he gets the letter, this letter of warnings and threats, he simply doesn't know what to do anymore.

[21:38] The storm, the battle is far too big. It's winning. It looks scary. It looks intimidating. It's impossible.

Easy to feel like that, isn't it? Easy to feel like that. When that debt letter comes again and the job termination is put into place, the hospital appointment arrives, when that Bible verse that you're reading convicts you.

that you're living wrong, that you're caving to your temptations time and time again. When a friend confronts your wrongs and an amount of other stuff, it's easy to feel the way Hezekiah felt when the letter was given to him.

Well, do what Hezekiah did. the Bible tells us He took the letter and He spread it before the Lord physically.

He took this big, overpowering, intimidating, threatening letter and literally, physically laid it before the Lord.

[23:07] He prayed to the Lord, Lord God of Israel enshrined, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. Give ear, Lord, and hear, open your eyes, Lord.

There you go. He said, I cannot do another single thing, God. I've tried. I've tried and I've tried, but for me it's impossible.

And so as my defender, as the one who does the impossible, I surrender all of this in its absolute entirety to you. He just laid it physically, mentally, spiritually, at the feet of Jesus, and Jesus took care of it.

Be encouraged by this. If you're still waiting, then physically, mentally, and spiritually, take your storm, your battle, written down, and physically, spiritually, and mentally lay it open before the Lord. Spread it open at the feet of Jesus. And like Hezekiah did, say enough is enough I can't do one single thing. You're my defender, so there you go.

[24:37] And then go to sleep. Leave it with Him. And that's what Paul did. That's what Paul done.

That night, in those barracks, he physically, mentally, spiritually, laid his impossible problem at the feet of Jesus than Jesus did it for him.

Because for sure, Paul did indeed then go. And over the next pages, we see Paul put in front of Felix, Festus, Agrippa, working his way through the high authorities of the Gentiles, as Jesus told him he would do.

And little did these rulers consider that everything that was happening was fully God-ordained. For at all stages of these hearings, before these rulers, Paul simply explained that the one and same good news message is for them.

[25:52] he used his life story to tell the human authorities, to tell their courts and all their peoples that God loves them so much that he gave his son, that if they simply just believe, they would not go to hell, but to heaven.

the world's leading authorities were all told the gospel, the impossible mission made possible by Jesus.

Remember when the disciples asked Jesus, who exactly can get to heaven? You know, they were saying, if all of humanity is truly warped, is truly evil, is truly all self-focused, how really can one hear the good news, Jesus, they ask?

How can one go to heaven, be saved, Jesus, they ask? And Jesus responded, exactly. It's impossible. It's impossible for you humans, but not with God.

All things are possible with God. And so no matter what anyone has done, or how far they have fallen, whatever temptation, addiction it may be, whatever went on, Jesus can and will and still does forgive.

[27:33] And all who believe he takes to heaven, if, if they just believe. and that's still the scene today. And so, back here in Acts, for as impossible as it seemed, the Roman rulers would ever hear about Jesus.

They did. They did. As up through the ranks of the Roman Empire, via these three major court hearings, the message went.

And by the end of chapter 26, the beginning of chapter 27, I'm sure Paul was very encouraged indeed. Because he was en route to Rome.

And the Lord's angel once again confirms to him, Paul, you will preach to Caesar. Verse 24, Paul, you will preach to Caesar.

the enemy really believed he could block the message getting to Rome. He tried desperately. Because once it was preached in Rome, it would be truly established.

[28:54] Incredible, isn't it? Truly incredible. Jesus does the impossible. And so, let the finishing word echo they already said, if you haven't accepted Jesus yet, Jesus can and will save you.

And fellow Christian, fellow disciple, whatever seems impossible in your life, will lay it physically, mentally, spiritually before the Lord.

For all things are possible with him. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you.

It's not just words that you do the impossible, but we read the accounts of the impossible stuff being done by you.

all through the Bible. And Lord, we ourselves have witnessed in our own lifetime, Lord, the impossible things being done by you in the world today.

[30:17] So, it's not just words, God, it's real. And so, our prayer, Lord, is that if anyone is yet to fully embark on a relationship with you, that they wouldn't be held back for whatever they think they've done or how far they've went, that they would know you will save and forgive no matter what.

And for us as disciples of yours, Lord, may we know, whatever we struggle with, whatever's going on, you can sort it out and deal with it for us.

Help us take Hezekiah's approach, physically, mentally, spiritually, led before you, and let you deal with it.

in the name of Jesus, Amen. Amen. Indeed, thank you. Thank you indeed. So if you're able to stand, please do. We're going to sing, yet not I, but Christ in me.

For it's Christ in Christ. If you're able to join us at six, that would be lovely. Do pray for the ladies on Thursday, and do come along on Saturday evening, if you can.

[31:24] for now go forth remembering Jesus actually said, in this world you would have trouble, but that you could take heart because He has overcome the world.

And so therefore go forth, really go, in the full knowledge and full assurance that you really can do all things through Jesus who strengthens you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, of the Holy Spirit. Amen.