

Is Anything Too Hard For The Lord

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles with you, open up to Genesis 18.

! We'll just forge ahead in Genesis.! We were here in this chapter two weeks ago,! and then Libby's dad came last week and preached to us.

It was great. So now we're going to come back to chapter 18. And we'll have one more week in this chapter after today. And then move on to chapter 19. But we're going to read really the first half of the chapter this morning and cover a section that I really didn't give much attention to a couple of weeks ago.

But let's start there in verse one. You guys, you can stand if you want. Why not? Let's stand as we normally do. Beginning in verse one, And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.

He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

[1 : 18] Let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree while I bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves. And after that, you may pass on since you have come to your servant.

So they said, Do as you have said. And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, Quick, three sales of fine flour, knead it and make cakes. And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf tender and good and gave it to a young man who prepared it quickly.

Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, Where is Sarah, your wife?

And he said, She is in the tent. The Lord said, I will return to you about this time next year. And Sarah, your wife, shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

Now, Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, Am I worn out and my Lord is old that I shall have pleasure?

[2 : 19] The Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you about this time next year.

And Sarah shall have a son. But Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh for she was afraid. He said, No, but you did laugh.

Father, we thank you that Moses, through the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, recorded. This interaction between Abraham and Sarah. And the Lord himself, you.

And so we ask this morning that you would teach us about yourself as we read about their interaction. Help us to understand your promises. Help us to understand what it means to live by faith in your promises.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So one of the one of the key differences between what we call the prosperity gospel or the health and wealth gospel and the genuine and authentic true gospel is one that stood out to me as I was studying this text and one that stood out to me even more as I was driving around looking to check and see how the roads were early this morning, seeing if people could get here to the church and all those sorts of things.

[3 : 44] One thing that stood out to me that was running through my mind was was the difference in how we understand the promises of God. Differences in how we understand what we can claim from God and and what we can be confident of that God is actually going to do.

Because in the prosperity gospel, if you proclaim something, if you claim something with enough faith, then you're actually capable of binding God to some sort of action.

Whether he has said specifically that he's going to do that or not, your words are capable of bringing into existence some sort of reality, a reality oftentimes provided by God himself.

So that in a sense, your proclamation is able to determine what God is going to do. And yet the biblical gospel is just the opposite.

It's the promises of God. It's the proclamation of God himself that determines what we do. It's the other way around. And what we're seeing here in Genesis chapter 18, as we look again at this interaction between the Lord, the Lord and two of his angels as they interact with Abraham and ultimately with Sarah, what we are seeing is a biblical portrait and portrayal of how how we are to react and respond to the promises of God.

[5 : 05] One of the things that stands out in in this passage, if you begin in verse nine, we covered the first eight verses a couple of weeks ago and saw Abram's great hospitality. But as we as we as we look and jump in at verse nine, we see the attention focus from Abraham immediately to Sarah, because God asks, where is Sarah, your wife?

And Abraham, reprise and honesty, she is in the tent, which was which would not have been unusual at all in those days. It would not have been unusual when you had some some men, some male visitors, strangers come for the head of the household to meet them and and and see who they were and take care of their needs and for his wife to remain sort of in the background, even at times out of sight.

And that's where Sarah is. She's out of sight. She's inside of the tent. There's no indication that she's ever come out of the tent, which which means that even the question itself reveals to Abraham and to Sarah.

A bit more clearly who it is that they're dealing with, because not only does he know that she's in the tent, I suppose he could have surmised that when Abram went into the tent. But now he even demonstrates the fact that he already knows her name.

Where is she? He asks the attention, the focus is shifting. And then verse 10, the Lord said, I will surely return to you about this time next year.

[6 : 27] And Sarah, your wife, shall have a son. Now, that promise is not news to Abraham. It's something that Abraham has already heard just previously in chapter 17.

Look back in chapter 17, verse 15. God said to Abraham, as for Sarah, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarah, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her.

And moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her and she shall become nations. Kings of peoples shall come from her and then move down to the middle of verse 18.

God says, Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

And then verse 21. I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year. So not only not only in a broad sense does Abraham already know that that he's going to have a child through Sarah, but he knows specifically the timing of it, which means that chapters 18 is happening.

[7 : 33] It's not just in the sequence of recordings in Genesis, but it's happening in time right after chapter 17. In chapter 17, Abraham is told about this time next year, Sarah is going to have a son.

Now in chapter 18, God says again, but this time in the hearing of Sarah herself, I will return to you and Sarah, your wife, shall have a son about this time next year.

And we are told that Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him, behind Abraham. So now Sarah knows. Abraham already knows this. Abraham's already received this information.

But this is the first time that Sarah has heard the promise of a son coming through her with this much specificity. It was really broad in the beginning. In Genesis chapter 12, God simply told Abraham that he would have offspring and that through those offspring, through his seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

And of course, as you move through the story of Abraham, Sarah and Abraham, realizing that she's getting old, assume that she's not the one through whom Abraham's offspring will come into the world.

[8 : 39] So that in chapter 16, they concoct a plan and Abraham impregnates her her handmaid, Hagar. But it's made clear in chapter 17. No, the son that you have through Hagar is not the promised one.

He is not the seed. He's not the one through whom my covenant promises will go. That's clear to Abraham. Now it becomes clear to Sarah and she sees she hears and understands the promise. But hearing and understanding the promise is not the same as hearing and believing the promise because she expresses doubt. Verse 11.

Now, Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, after I am worn out and my Lord is old, shall I have pleasure?

Now, we have a tendency sometimes to read that and think, why is she being ridiculous? Why? Why is Sarah filled with doubt? She should know by now she's seen God do incredible things through Abraham, her husband.

[9 : 48] She should know by now she shouldn't be doubting him. Why does she respond in this way? But I don't think Moses who recorded this and the Holy Spirit, as he inspired Moses to record in this way, wants us to think that way.

I think he wants us to understand why she's having trouble believing this very clear, very explicit and very specific promise. Because everything around her tells her that this isn't going to happen. Notice he emphasizes Abraham and Sarah were old. And in case you don't understand that, they're advanced in years. And if that's not enough for you, he tells us specifically the way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.

Now, that had probably happened actually years earlier. We know from chapter 16 that that Sarah has lost her hope that she's going to have a child.

And the reason probably that she lost hope by then is she has probably already entered the early stages of menopause in chapter 16. And now, by the time we reach chapter 18, she can't, by any natural means, by any means by which anyone would normally think of, she cannot possibly have children.

[11 : 03] So she and her husband are both old. They're both past the age where this sort of thing is possible. Her body is no longer physically capable of bearing children.

That's made clear. So we shouldn't be surprised and we shouldn't be caught off guard by her response. In fact, she's not the only one who responds in this way. Look back at chapter 17 again. It's amazing how closely Abraham's response in chapter 17 parallels Sarah's response in chapter 18. Because Abraham initially, when God comes to him in chapter 17 and God tells him, hey, you're going to have a son through Sarah.

Abraham initially pleads, that's not necessary. Oh, that Ishmael might live before you. Just let Ishmael be the one through whom the promise will come. Verse 17.

Take a look again. Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old?

[12 : 05] Shall Sarah, who is 90 years old, bear a child? So he responds in much the same way. He laughs initially. It's not a laugh of derision.

It's just a laugh of disbelief of can this actually happen? Is this really what you're going to do?

Because it seems on the surface to be ridiculous. I'm a hundred. My wife is 90 years old.

And even if you do the math, even if you figure that even if you assume and we don't know this, but even if you assume that they were aging at a slower rate than we do because they lived longer lives.

Sarah living to be 127, Abraham living to be 160. Even if you do the math, they're still well past the age where this sort of thing is even possible.

Even with medical science today, it would be incredibly difficult to make something like this to happen. And now here they are living centuries and centuries ago.

[13 : 04] It's not possible in their minds. It can't be. And so Abraham responds by laughing. Are you really going to do this? Is this even possible? Just as Sarah responds by laughing.

Is this even possible? She thinks. So her response is not one that I think we're supposed to respond to and say, oh, I can't believe Sarah. I can't believe that she would respond that way because in reality, she's responding the same way that you or I would respond to this kind of news.

And yet God's answer and God's reply back to Sarah, I think, is the same reply that he would give to us when we fall into the tendency to doubt God's promises to us.

Listen to what he says. Verse 13. The Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh and say, shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?

Now, pause for a moment there. God is continuing to reveal his identity in clearer and clearer ways. First, he makes the mention of Sarah's name without having been introduced to her.

[14:12] But now he knows things that Sarah actually didn't say or do out loud. We're told that Sarah laughed to herself and she thought to herself. These were this was her internal reaction.

It's not as if she busted out in in this loud, bellyaching laughter. This was in her own thoughts. It was in her own heart. She's not doing this out loud. She's not even visible to them, so they can't see her. She's inside the tent and she has this private laughter within herself and these private thoughts. But now God reveals that he knows her thoughts. He's showing clearly who he is.

Why did she laugh and say, shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old? And then here's his response. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Or put more literally, is anything too wonderful for the Lord? Is anything is anything outside the realm of possibility for the Lord now that they know clearly who it is that's speaking to them?

[15:12] Now that he's made himself known without any doubt, the question has to come. Is there anything that I can't do if I say that I'm going to do something, no matter how incredible it might seem to you, no matter how far-fetched it might seem or how impossible it might seem, pause and ask yourself the question, is there anything at all that's impossible for God to do?

Is there anything outside the realm of possibility for him? And the obvious answer that's expected by God is no. There's nothing that God can't do. He is omnipotent. There's nothing outside of his ability.

He's the one that brought everything into existence. He's the one who spoke in Genesis chapter 1 and things leapt into existence. He's the one who decided upon and created the process of procreation and decided how it would happen.

And after the fall, he's the one who put in the effects of the fall, which included aging and all these other things. God's in charge of all of this stuff. And if you've been reading through the book of Genesis, as Moses assumes you've been doing when you arrive at chapter 18, then God's question should seem like an obvious one in light of who he is, in light of everything else that he has done up to this point in the book of Genesis.

Is anything, is anything outside the realm of possibility if God says that he's going to do it? Even this, even this great thing.

[16:40] Imagine how life changing even this concept is for Sarah. Sarah, she's 90 years old. At this point in her life, being unable to bear children is just a part of her identity.

It's how she thinks of herself. It's how everyone around her would think of her. And in fact, I think it's how Moses wants us to think of her all the way up to this point. Everything that we know about Sarah actually amounts to a very small amount.

It's not much. But we know this one thing. She can't have children. Go all the way back to chapter 11. I want you to see this. When she's introduced to us, we are told in verse 29, Abram and Nahor took wives.

The name of Abram's wife was Sarai. OK, so we know her name. And then in verse 30, the one thing that we're told about her. Now, Sarai was barren.

She had no child. Now, the first thing that we are told about Sarah is that she doesn't have any children. She has not been able to conceive. She can't have children.

[17:47] And then, of course, you have all the promises that follow. And yet, all of those promises don't change her reality. The fact that her husband has been promised that he will be a father of a multitude of nations has not changed the fact that she's incapable of having children.

Go to chapter 15. Abraham highlights this again. Chapter 15, verse 2, Abram said, Oh, Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. That phrase, I continue childless, is literally translated, I'm going to die childless. I'm going to die without any offspring, God. So Abraham, at this point, assumes that that's never going to change. That's his lot in life. That's who his wife Sarah is. She cannot bear him any children. Finally, Sarah becomes so distressed by the time you arrive at chapter 16 that she concox the plan.

We're told in chapter 16, verse 1, Now Sarah, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. That's just, that's her reality. That's who she is.

[18:55] So that when God comes and says, I'm going to fundamentally change your understanding of who you are, and what I'm going to do through you and for you, the only reason that she would believe that promise is if she had a clear understanding of the reality that nothing,

nothing is impossible.

Nothing is too hard for the Lord. There's nothing else that could have led to her to respond in any other way.

It's just not possible. It can't be done by normal human means. And so only if she comes to understand who God is, only if she has a clear view of the fact that he can do anything that he wants to do because he's the sovereign creator of all things, only then will she actually be capable of believing the promise because it's such an incredible promise.

But I don't think that that's just true for her. I think that there are, throughout the Scriptures, a number of promises that on their surface, if you look at yourself, if you know who you are, and then you look at the promises of God, your natural reaction will be, that's never going to happen.

That's never going to happen because I am who I am. This is just who I am. This is just what I'm like. This is what I'm beset with. And these are my circumstances.

[20 : 25] And so, yeah, I see your promise, God. I hear what you're saying, but that's not going to happen. See, there are some of God's promises that don't directly involve us doing anything at all.

They're just straight promises of what God is going to do or what God is going to not do. So, even though the last couple of days and over the next couple of days, some of us may doubt in our minds whether or not the promise to Noah that God made that he'd never flood the earth again is really going to come true.

The reality is, he's never going to flood the world in the way that he did in the days of Noah. And that doesn't depend upon anything that anyone does. God just said, I'm never going to do that again.

That's a promise that does not depend, it is not contingent in any way on any person. It's just God sovereignly declaring what he's going to do.

And there are a number of promises throughout the Scriptures that are like that. And then there are other times when God gives promises that are contingent upon our behavior and he makes that clear when he makes the promises.

[21 : 30] He tells Israel over and over again throughout the law that if you do X, Y, and Z, if you break this commandment or that commandment, that I'm going to spit you out of the land.

I'm going to kick you out of the land. So Israel's continuing possession of the land, their continuing to remain in the promised land is entirely contingent upon how they behave and how they respond to God's Word and God's command.

And of course, as you read through the biblical story, you find out that they didn't respond very well. That eventually they reach a point of idolatry and sinfulness that God does, in fact, kick them out of the promised land because their remaining and receiving and holding on to that piece of land was contingent upon their obedience to the Word of God.

And there are a lot of promises and commands that operate in that way in the Bible. I was thinking earlier of a command and a revelation of God's will in one of Paul's letters.

Turn over to 1 Thessalonians 4. I think this is a great passage to point to when you're talking to people who are struggling in their sin, who are wrestling with it and who have a tendency to want to downplay the significance of their sin, to downplay whether or not it's actually displeasing to God.

[22 : 57] Listen to this in 1 Thessalonians 4, starting in verse 3. For this is the will of God. That's a clear statement. This is what God wants.

Your sanctification. He wants you to be holy. That you abstain from sexual immorality. That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

God wants His people to be sexually pure. That's one of the things that He desires. And yet, despite the fact that that's what God wants, that that's in fact what God wills, we know that whether or not that actually is the case for each one of us depends upon a number of decisions that we make throughout the course of our days.

Decision not to go to a certain website or decision not to watch certain television shows or certain movies or not to be around certain people. We know that whether or not we actually abstain from sexual immorality depends upon what we do and how we interact.

So you have promises from God that are not dependent in any way upon what we do. And then you have statements from God whether they're commands or promises that are contingent upon our behavior and what we do.

[24 : 27] But the vast majority of the promises of God that we find in the Scriptures fall in between those two categories. Here's what I mean. I mean that in an ultimate sense, God is going to accomplish His will in our lives.

He is. In an ultimate, broad sense, He is. He is going to move us from a state of sinfulness. As believers in Christ, the Spirit will work in such a way that we actually become more holy throughout our lives.

So in a broad, bigger sense, that's not contingent upon us. But in reality, it is to a certain degree. Our advancement in holiness, that is our overall sanctification, is contingent upon a lot of small decisions that we make.

You won't become more holy if you don't spend time in God's Word. You won't become more holy if you don't gather together on a regular basis with other believers.

And so when you read about, for instance, God's promise in Philippians 1.6 that He is going to complete, He's going to bring to completion the work that He began in you, that's a promise that initially is not contingent upon our behavior.

[25 : 44] But we know that involved in that are a whole lot of things that we have to actually do in order for God's work to continue and progress in us.

In fact, one of the best examples of how these two things work together, God's sovereign will for our lives coupled with our responsibility, is just a chapter after that promise in Philippians.

Turn over to Philippians 2. I want you to see this because I think this is one of the clearest examples of this. Chapter 2, verse 12. Paul says, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only is in my presence, but much more in my absence.

Here's their part. Here's their role. Now, I think what he means by work out your salvation, I think that he's talking about their sanctification.

Because he's just said, as you have always obeyed, so now. Keep doing that. Keep obeying that. So work out your own salvation. Pursue your own holiness.

[26 : 54] Pursue your own sanctification. But then verse 13 comes. For or because. So here's the reason why you're going to do everything that you can do to become more holy.

Because it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. So all of your striving and all of your effort and all of your Bible memory and your church attendance and your prayer and your accountability groups and everything else that you do to pursue holiness, Paul says, ultimately, those things are working and they will happen because God is at work in you to transform you.

That's the promise. He's going to continue that work. He will not stop. And what's He doing? He's changing your will. He's changing your desires, which means that He also changes what you do.

He changes your works. He causes you to work and do things that please Him, according to the Apostle Paul. So there you have a promise that broadly speaking, God is going to accomplish.

He's going to sanctify all those whom He has justified by faith in Jesus. It's going to happen. But on another level, our personal holiness depends upon our pursuit of all the means that God has provided to make us holy.

[28 : 18] And I think that the vast majority of the promises of God that we find throughout the Scriptures work in that way. That in a large picture, we know God is ultimately going to take us from point A to point B.

But in order for us to make that journey from point A to point B, we have to do a whole lot of things. Now that can sometimes cause us to kind of do mental flips in our mind because we have a bad habit of wanting to understand those things that are beyond our comprehension.

We have a bad habit of wanting to try to simplify and pare everything down to something that's easy to explain. But there are some concepts like the interaction between God's sovereignty and our responsibility.

Or like the fact that God is one God who exists in three persons. There are some concepts involving God's nature and how He's at work in the world that ultimately are beyond our comprehension.

And so we have to be able to step back and say, I don't fully understand that and how those things fit together, but they fit together because God puts them together. And in the midst of that, we should be able to say, I know even though it looks impossible, I know that God's going to do this great work in my life and He's going to accomplish it.

[29 : 38] And I also know that that's going to involve me doing certain things along the way. And just because I struggle in doing those things, I won't despair and I won't give up because there is nothing that's too hard or too difficult for the Lord.

I think the promise that God gives to Sarah in this chapter in Genesis 18 is exactly that kind of promise. Because we all know that in order for Sarah to actually give birth to Abraham's child, Sarah and Abraham are responsible for actions that must follow this promise.

We all know that. And in fact, most commentators believe that when Sarah says, asks the question, am I going to experience this pleasure at this age that she's not simply referring to the pleasure of giving birth to a child, but to the entire process of what's necessary to conceive of a child.

And she's saying, this is not even going to happen here. And God is saying, oh no, it's going to happen. Ultimately, I will fulfill my promise a year from now. You're going to have a kid. But that means the things that you think are not possible for you to do are going to happen in the meantime. A promise that ultimately is not contingent or conditional and yet contains within it conditional elements, things that are required of Abraham and Sarah.

[30 : 58] That's how God's, most of God's promises aim directly at us. That's how they, that's how they function. He says, I'm going to give you this or I'm going to do this for you.

God determines reality, not us. And yet, that doesn't absolve us from the responsibility of pursuing that which God has promised.

Now, here's the part where we switch from normal sermon mode into you guys getting to interact since we're a small crowd this morning. Can you guys think of some other promises in the Scriptures that God gives that ultimately he's going to accomplish, he's going to do it.

But, we have to do something along the way. Can you think, take a moment, I know that you weren't ready for that kind of a question, but can you think of some other promises that are like that?

Libby? Noah's Ark. Noah's Ark, yeah. God's going to save Noah and his family, he says it, and yet he still, he has to build the Ark. Yeah, that's a good one.

[32 : 04] It's a good Old Testament one. God's elect people and our commission. Okay, so, dealing with the doctrine of election, God says, I'm going to save these people.

Now, we don't know who they are, but in his mind, he's going to save them. And yet, he says in Romans 10, nobody's going to be saved apart from the preaching of the gospel. So, yeah, he's going to save his chosen people, and yet he's not going to save anybody if we don't preach the gospel.

It's contingent upon us. Yeah, that's a good one. I feel like the great condition is to build and make disciples. You have to walk out of the door and make disciples.

It takes obedience. It takes my heart to baptize them in the gospel of the spirit. So, there's like this kind of conflict going on.

Like, you're going to walk out the door, feel like you're doing it in the power of the gospel of the spirit. Yeah. That's a good one.

[33 : 05] Especially, too, if you think in terms of the idea of all nations. I mean, Jesus has said, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And he's also said that there will be people from every nation, from every tribe and tongue that will come.

And yet, we're the ones who have to go to the nations. He's going to build his church. Nothing can stop that. In fact, he's going to build it from people from every nation. Nothing can stop that. And yet, we have to go to the nations and baptize and teach.

Which makes sense out of Jesus saying before that, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go. It makes sense out of it. If we feel that our authority on our own account, that's given.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Any others that you guys can think of? Jesus. Standard Sunday School. Jesus. Jesus is always the right answer. Yeah. Yeah.

[34 : 10] There was a lot that Jesus had to do in order for him to be on the cross as a sinless offering and sacrifice. Yeah. Yeah. Not only that, but even for him to come into the world, I mean, he has to be born in Bethlehem.

That's part of the promise. He's going to come. He's going to be born in Bethlehem. Yet, Joseph and Mary have to actually travel down to Bethlehem. A census has to be declared. I mean, there are things a lot of people have to do for that to happen.

Greg? Moses. Moses in general. Yeah. Yeah. God raises him up for the specific purpose of delivering the people of Israel out of Egypt.

and God's going to do that. It's going to happen. And yet, yeah, Moses has to do a lot of stuff. He didn't want to do it. Yeah. Yeah. And sometimes we don't want to do the stuff that's necessary. And it's like they come up in the Red Sea. It's like, I need to walk up in and take your staff in the water and walk through and see, it's like, that sounds, I'm all looking like a fool.

[35 : 11] Yeah. You made me look like a fool. Yeah. More movie quotes. Awesome. He's got to turn into water. Yeah. Yeah. And then sometimes you even have the instance where Moses gets in trouble for striking the rock instead of speaking to it.

Yet, God still accomplished his purposes even though at that point Moses messed up. Yeah. I think another good picture is something in Numbers when Moses is up to two spies and they come back with these like, yeah, let's go to the plan and let's take it.

They choose God to do so. They have to walk in the desert and Joshua and they cross the Jordan and since God is in, like, he's going to Jerusalem to take it and they actually have a medium.

Yeah. So in Numbers they hit the bottom and they're going to be scared. Yeah. And Joshua they march around seven times and ultimately yeah, he gives them the promised land.

That's a good example. when Jesus fed the 5,000 it wasn't like he snapped his feed with the instant and food was a part of the people that the disciples had to trust and serve and continue to give out food that was just abundant and it was just there but they still they went around and they got in groups that there was a system to it.

[36 : 33] Yeah, they still had to do stuff. Yeah. It's a miraculous event like the conception of Isaac and yet they have to do stuff. Yeah. But he tells them that he's going to feed the people that he can provide.

In fact, he chastises them for doubting him later on when he's going to do a similar miracle. So I guess you could say the same is true for I guess the whole plan of redemption. I mean, yes, it was going to happen no matter what but still the conception of certain children and following this prophecy and that.

The whole thing was God's sovereign plan but still there's so many people who had to do their part. Yeah. People have to do stuff.

Yeah, here's one that's I mean, it's just they do I mean, it's just in everything. Here's one that I think is particularly relevant when you're when you're facing suffering or you're you're talking to those who are in the midst of suffering and it's one that it's one of those verses sometimes people say oh, don't quote that to people when they're actually in suffering it's just going to be discouraging and I think that that's a wrong attitude and a wrong approach.

I think that in a loving sensitive way we can remind people of the promises of God and that's not us saying to them hey, get it right and believe that's us being kind enough to say hey, don't forget and one that we hear a lot Romans 8 28 and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose they do they work together for good God is at work doing something and yet for that to happen God has to work through a lot of other people and then when we see in context what the good is that God is doing for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son the good that God is doing in all things for those who love him is conforming us to the image of Jesus but again that's sanctification and that happens as we spend time in the word and in prayer and gathering together with the body of Christ and all those other spiritual disciplines that's how that happens and yet he says everything everything's going to work toward that end

[38 : 46] God is going to move it all toward that end and it doesn't absolve us of the responsibility to pursue the means that God has given to us to become conformed to the image of his son any others you guys can think of Ben yeah yeah yeah and suffering is designed by God to lead us to that point but it's not as if that means we can just sit back and think nothing or do nothing in fact it's going to passages like that that actually work out that effect in us going to the word of God there are probably a ton of these that we could think of there are probably a whole lot more that you guys could name instances in which ultimately

God's going to accomplish his will in us and through us but we have a role in that we are responsible to do something in the midst of that which is to say returning back to where we started which is to say that we are not ultimately the determiners of our fate we are not ultimately the ones who get to decide what God's will is we don't get to proclaim what God's promises will be he

proclaims his promises to us and then we should live out a life of faith in response to all of those promises and when we're interacting with people who are at a time and in a moment of life in which they're prone to doubt that we need to remind them if it's a fellow believer we need to remind them of the kinds of promises that we're looking at here in these various places in the New Testament if it's a person who's lost we need to tell them that you must believe in order to be saved God has made a promise all those who believe in him will not perish but will have everlasting life but you believe God's promise God's word stands clear we don't get to decide what constitutes salvation and what doesn't we don't get to decide who's in and who's out God has said he has declared the way of salvation through faith in Christ and so even when we're talking to non believers we can bring up these clear promises of God this is what he's going to save all those who trust in him and then we can say honestly to them you have to trust mispronouncements determine reality and then we live by faith in that reality let's pray