

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: GOD NEVER COMMANDS THE IMPOSSIBLE

Scripture: Book of Mormon, I Nephi 1:97-102.

And after the angel had departed, Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying, How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us? And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying, Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold, he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands? Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea, and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through out of captivity on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea. Let us go up; and the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban even as the Egyptians.

The Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he hath commanded them.

During the last World War the SeaBees had a motto which went something like this: "The difficult things we do at once; the impossible may take slightly longer." There are many seemingly "impossible" things which have been done, or will some day be done by men who have faith enough to try, determination enough to persevere, and intelligence enough to think, to experiment, to explore, and to find the way.

Each of the prophets, philosophers, statesmen, scientists, and inventors of the world has been ridiculed in his time by people who could prove that the thing he was attempting was impossible. When word leaked out that the Wright Brothers were trying to invent a flying machine, one scientist published a learned and very scholarly scientific paper to prove that it was utterly impossible for man to fly. When the first crude steam railway was built, it was denounced by men who proved according to scientific principles that any speed faster than ten miles an hour would be fatal to the passengers. There is a classic story about the great electrical company where it was the custom to initiate each new employee by assigning the impossible task of frosting a light bulb on the inside. Everybody knew it couldn't be done; and there was a lot of fun watching the rookies try -- until one day the job was assigned to a rookie who didn't know that it couldn't be done, and he did it.

So many "impossible" scientific marvels have been accomplished in the recent past that we should be very wary and hesitant about labelling anything "impossible." Yet for all our experience with the impossible things that have been accomplished, some of us are still highly skeptical when it comes to things of the spirit, or matters of religious or semi-religious belief. In this modern age some people are willing to accept the Bible, for example, as a good (but not infallible) source book of morality and ethics; but they simply cannot believe that the Red Sea was miraculously divided for the passage of Israel, or that Abraham and Sarah produced a child in their old age, or that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down when the priests blew on their trumpets and the people raised a great shout, or that Jesus was born of a virgin. The philosophy of the skeptic is now and always has been, "It has never been done before, therefore it can't be done; it's impossible."

Let us admit at this point that there is a difference between blind, unreasoning and unreasonable credulity, and rational faith. It is certainly true that God is a God of law and order; that his reign of law is everywhere in time and space; and that he will never do anything which is contrary to law. But on the other hand, God is not a helpless prisoner within a mechanistic universe which he somehow set in operation, but which he is now power-

less to regulate or control. He is an immanent God; he is in all things, and through all things, and is the power by which they are made and sustained. But he is also above all things, and beneath all things, and round about all things; he is transcendent as well as immanent. He still has power to suspend or modify the operation of one law with another. He understands laws and principles which as yet are mysteries to men. The boundless energies, resources, and facilities of the universe do not control him; they are under his control.

"With God all things are possible." Nothing is impossible to him except that it is impossible for him to lie, or to break his word, or to deny his own nature by doing evil. Not only are all things possible to God, but Jesus promised that "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed nothing shall be impossible to you," and again, that "all things are possible to him that believeth."

At times, God commands men to perform tasks which seem to be utterly impossible, and which are impossible to human strength alone. But the man of faith knows that when God commands, he also commits himself to supply the strength and the direction, and to prepare the means whereby the assigned task may be completed. God never commands the impossible. He never commands, and then leaves man without the strength, or the intelligence and wisdom, or the means to fulfill his commandments. Why then are the people who serve him so often weak, vacillating, and ineffectual? Why do we not accomplish more for him? Here are at least five reasons.

(1) Perhaps we are attempting something which God didn't command, and which he doesn't want. We should check the source of our commandment, make sure that God has spoken, and that we understand him correctly.

(2) Perhaps God did command the thing we are attempting to do, and does want it, but not yet. Perhaps our contribution is to prepare the way, to lay a foundation on which others can build, and then wait patiently for him.

(3) Perhaps we have not applied ourselves, or worked hard enough, or used all the strength and ingenuity and wisdom which was available in ourselves before asking God to take over. Good stewards

should do some things of their own initiative and of their own will. It is not always meet that God should command in all things, or that he should supply us with supernatural powers while our natural powers lie dormant.

(4) Perhaps we have relied too much on human strength and wisdom -- have tried to take all the credit for ourselves -- have been too proud to confess that even all of our natural powers are from God, and are to be administered as a stewardship from him. A humble man will use his own intelligence and his own strength, but will always look to God for guidance, for direction, and for supplementary power when it is needed.

(5) Perhaps we have not manifested enough faith -- have not really believed that God would supply our lack, and have given up the task almost before we started. We are commanded to "ask in faith, nothing wavering," for "a double minded man is unstable in all his ways." God does not grant supernatural powers to unstable men.

The way of obedience is too often thought of in the popular mind as hard; but one of the proverbs says: "The way of the transgressor is hard," and Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Some modern psychologist has said that religion should be a lift, not a load. The way of obedience is easy, because when we obey God, we are going with God, and every law of the universe is cooperating and helping us along. The way of the transgressor is hard, because in defying God and God's laws he finds himself waging not only a hard, but a one-sided and futile battle. If, like Paul before his conversion, he insisted on "kicking against the pricks" he only finds that the harder he kicks, the deeper and the more painful the pricks of the pointed ox-goad become. With God, one is a majority. Without God, though every man in the world be on your side, you are in the minority.

When you are called upon to do mighty things for God -- impossible things -- things beyond your physical and mental powers to accomplish, remember that God never commands the impossible -- that when he commands he always prepares the ways and means for the man of faith to fulfill his commands.