

Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

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[0 : 00] Well, in Acts chapter 12, we will turn there. You've already there, some of you. We've read that passage together so joyously and so glad that the children could join us.

I became friends with some of those that were sitting in the corner over here. And children are a blessing from the Lord and we should cherish their very being.

And so in Acts chapter 12, we see this story about what is taking place and I would ask, is anything too hard for the Lord?

And we think about that. Is anything too hard for the Lord? What are you experiencing right now? Jeremiah 32, 27 says, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? This is the Lord, the God of all flesh ruling over all of us.

[1 : 05] The Creator of the world is anything too hard? Think about what you're going through. Maybe it's health issues.

My wife's going through health issues. She's going through serious health issues. Is that too hard for the Lord? Finances.

Job situations. Businesses that have been upended a bit with the pandemic. Maybe it's your habitual sin.

I just can't conquer this. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is that sin too hard for the Lord?

What about depression and discouragement? Is that too hard for the Lord? Fears that you might have, broken relationships, family members, children, grown children that you're separated from.

[2 : 16] Is that too hard for the Lord? Is there worthiness to be saved by Him? Is your sin so bad?

Is what you've done in your life so bad that the Lord cannot save? And the answer to all of these, of course, is absolutely not. He said, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh.

Is anything too hard for me? The answer is redundant. No. The Lord didn't wait for an answer.

He didn't wait for a vote. There's nothing too hard. So that's where we come this morning. What is it in your life that you need the Lord to work in?

Where do you need Him to minister to you? To accomplish, to set you free from perhaps a sin? Or you're experiencing some kind of emotional, mental, relational.

[3 : 21] What's happening in your life that you want the Lord to meet with you today? I mean, think about it right now. What is it you want the Lord to meet with you right now? I need Him to minister to me in this area.

Think of what that one thing might be. Is that too hard for the Lord? This passage in here has a beautiful narrative.

God is the main focus. He's the main purpose of this story. This isn't a story about Peter or the angel or the guards.

This is a story about God. And He wants to be a part of your story as well. Whatever you're facing. 15 out of these 25 verses, which we read, we deal with prayer. And think of who Peter was, the apostle of the Lord.

[4 : 29] The leading apostle of the Lord. When you see the lists of the apostles, it starts with Peter. Every one of them start with Peter. Peter was the leader of that.

And yet the Lord chose Peter. The Lord chose him. Herod did not choose Peter. The Lord chose Peter.

He chose Peter to go through a very serious situation for the glory of God. And so just because you're walking with the Lord, you're spending time with Him. You're in prayer.

You're in His Word. You're in His church. You're in His community of faith. You're seeking to repent of your sins. And you're walking as much as you can with the Lord.

Yet still things happen to you in your life. For His glory. It was the disciples who were walking along and they saw a man born blind.

[5 : 28] And they asked the Lord, said, Who is sinned? This man? Or his parents that he was born blind? And Jesus said, Neither.

But that the Son of Man may be glorified. And of course he healed this man born blind so that he may be glorified. I mean, this man went through his entire life at least up until that point.

Perhaps a young child, perhaps a young teenager. He spent 10, 12, 15 years in blindness for one purpose so that the glory of God may be seen.

Imagine what you're going through and say, Lord, when will it end? And yet we just submit ourselves to Him and say, To the glory of God is my sickness, my finances, my relationships.

I give it all to you. May you do whatever you're going to do through this for your glory. Does that change things? Now, it's about prayer to God.

[6 : 40] Remember I told you this is a story about God. It's prayer to God. And so if we look at this passage here, verses 1 through 5.

About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James, the brother of John of the sword. And when he saw that he pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

And he took a few days of unleavened bread. So it was the holy week that they could not do anything. They had to protect that. They had to protect that holy week.

And so he saw that when he arrested James, took care of him, then he said, I'm going to go for the big fish, Peter.

And he arrested and put him in prison, but he had to wait seven days. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering over to four squads of soldiers and guarding him, and tending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

[7 : 38] He wasn't going to take any chances. There were four groups of four rotating out every six hours, chained to those guards.

He wasn't going to let any of the disciples come and steal him away because this was his prize catch. He wasn't going to let him go. Now, Herod the King is Herod the Gripper.

Herod the Gripper was the grandson of Herod the Great. Herod the Great was the one who caused all of the boys under age two to be killed during the time of Jesus.

He was going after Jesus to kill him. And so this was Herod the Great. Herod the Great's son is Herod not so great because we don't know a lot about him.

So we just call him Herod not so great. And then there was Herod the Gripper. Herod the Great had a great, vast, huge covering. He was powerful.

[8 : 43] Herod the Gripper had an equally large following and large oversight. He was powerful. But he worked for the Caesar.

He worked for Rome. And the Jews didn't like that. But they connected on this point right here.

And he saw, I am getting favor from the Jews by doing this action, by putting in prison his disciples.

So Peter was kept in prison in verse 5, and earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Problems often drive us to prayer. Is that true? Problems will drive us to prayer.

And when the prayer, that is, when the problem is over, a lot of times what do we do? We're human beings. We stop praying, at least that earnestly.

[9 : 47] I like that this church didn't form a committee. Committees.

They began to pray. Those problems in the church drove them to earnest prayer was made to God by the church.

This wasn't a private prayer. It wasn't like, you all pray for Peter. Because the church came together, earnestly praying for his deliverance.

Because this was an important thing. And the church is called together to pray for the needs of its body, for the needs of its people. And when problems come in our life, don't be afraid to ask others, would you pray?

Call for the church to pray. Lift it up. What is the need that you have? Let's pray. These problems drive us to prayer.

[10 : 51] I worked for a Scottish man. He was from Glasgow. And he used to say, the only time we pray is when we're peely wally.

When we don't feel well, these aren't going so well. We need to pray at all times.

These problems drive us to prayer. Look at 2 Corinthians 1. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experience in Asia.

Now watch this. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Have you ever been there?

We despaired of life itself. We were discouraged. We were burdened. We were despaired. Indeed, this is Paul speaking, indeed we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

[12:00] This is done. We're over. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

Like the last part, I experienced the first part. It is not wrong to have these feelings. Paul is not saying, these are wrong feelings.

To go through life and say, what am I facing? I'm facing issues, problems, trials. Oh, this is the end of me. Lord, I can't take any more.

Those feelings are not wrong. But sometimes he takes us through those problems so that it says, but that was to make that being the despairing of life, the trouble that we're going through.

That was to make us rely not on ourselves. I know Scots aren't like this, but the Americans rely on themselves.

[13:05] Horribly rely on themselves. And the Lord saying, let me be your deliverer.

He delivered us from such deadly peril and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer.

It's called on the church so that we may, with many thanks, on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. And so sometimes problems come in the church because He wants the body to come together to pray, to depend on Him.

He said, yes, we're reminded once again the Lord God Almighty. This is His church.

We know that, but we need reminded. Jeremiah says, call to me and I'll answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.

[14:07] Ephesians 3.20, now to Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, all that we ask through prayer, according to the power that works in us, He is able.

Well, peace comes through prayer. So problems drive us to prayer and then peace will come through prayer. In verse 6, now when Herod was about to bring Him out, that is, the seven days the time of Passover had finished or getting close to, it was the very night before He was going to be killed, executed.

He knew this. Peter knew this. Okay. He knew what was going to take place the next morning. And yet here's what He was doing.

On the very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. What? Now I take some early flights from time to time and I have to get up at 3.30 in the morning and between the time I finally go to bed and get packed, it's usually 10 o'clock, maybe 10.30, because I've delayed too much, I've procrastinated.

And then from 10.30 to 3.30, it's just this relaxing sleep, right? No. Why? Because I'm going like, if I miss my flight, that could be horrible.

[15:34] And so it's 10.30, 11.30, 12.30, 1.30, 3 o'clock, 3.15. I'm awake all night long, getting ready and prepared to go on this trip.

I'm just anxious. We had, as a kid, the little kid at least, we would be ready for Christmas. And the night before, Christmas Eve, we couldn't go to sleep.

All of us would pack into one bed and there were five of us. And we would all pack into one bed and we would all get under the covers of this bed waiting and we couldn't go to sleep.

We were just thinking about the very next morning how exciting it was going to be. Now imagine, if you're going to be executed the next day, what is your status?

And Peter was... Sleep, it says. In the Greek, it says he was snoring. He's sleeping between two soldiers.

[16:34] So it wasn't even like between two pillows. He's sleeping between two soldiers. Strap them with chains. And centuries were outside the door guarding it. And then the angel of the Lord stood next to him and a light shone in the cell.

And still, it says, he had to strike Peter on the side to wake him. This is crazy. I can't sleep with a nightlight on.

My wife likes to have a nightlight. I can't sleep with a nightlight. Sometimes she'll get up and I'll go unplug the nightlight and hide it.

And she comes back and says, what did you do again? And I said, I need my sleep. I can't sleep with this bright, shining floodlight that's right in my eyes. It's a nightlight.

But I think it's a big bright... I can't sleep with light. I can't sleep with light, but here a light shone and Peter's still. Then the angel stands next to him.

[17 : 39] Now, you parents will only know this. You only experience this if you've been a parent of small children who come in the middle of the night, walk to your bed, and come within inches of your face.

You're fast asleep and all of a sudden you have this eerie feeling. Quiet. They didn't say a word. They're hardly breathing. But you know they're there.

And you just like wake out of a deep sleep like, what? What are you doing up? I need some water. There's some by your bed.

Oh yeah, off they go. Now here, an angel stood next to him. A light is shining, a bright light shines into it. He's going to be executed the next morning. And yet what was Peter doing?

Sleeping. Peace comes through prayer. He knew the church would be gathered together to be praying for him. Lord, I need that kind of peace.

[18 : 45] Maybe I need that kind of prayer. That's what we're given with prayer. Because here was Peter.

If I die tomorrow, I'm with the Lord. If I don't die tomorrow, it's because the Lord delivered me. And so therefore I sleep.

Isn't that a great way to live? He's either going to deliver me, He's either going to deliver me, or He's not going to deliver me. And I'll be with Him. Peace comes through prayer.

With men, this is impossible. With God, all things are possible. Now, there's power that comes through prayer as well. The angel said to him, dress yourself, put on the sandals.

And he did so. And he said to him, wrap your cloak around you, and follow me. And he went out and he followed him. And he didn't know what was being done by the angel was real, actually. But he thought he was seeing a vision.

[19 : 50] And when he passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. And what happened was, when they came to that iron gate, it opened of its own accord.

Matthew 7 says, Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you'll find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds into him who knocks it will be opened. What man among you is whose son asks for a loaf, he'll give him a stone.

If he asks for a fish, he'll give him a snake, will he? If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, he's talking about us as humans, not fully holy.

If we know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will your Father in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him? We don't get everything we ask for.

That might be bad. Little child, if you gave them everything they asked for, they'd have candy for breakfast, candy for lunch, candy for dinner, and then before meal at night, it's more candy.

[21 : 14] But our Father knows what we need, and we submit to Him. So it opened this door, this great giant door.

It opened of its own accord, and they went out and went along the street, and immediately the angel left him. And when Peter came to himself, he said, now I'm sure that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod, and from all the Jewish people were expecting.

Power came through prayer. The Puritan Thomas Watson said, it was the angel who fetched Peter from the jail, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.

I like that. The church gathered together, and it called on the angel and said, come, release Peter. And he came to this iron gate that could not be moved by human beings, and it opened of its own accord. Like the automatic doors going out of stores, and they just opened up when you stand by them.

[22 : 26] They just opened up. There's power in prayer. Let's depend on it. More so than our own ingenuity.

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was John Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. And so there they were, he knew where they were going to be, because this large house of Mary, and they had regular house

church gatherings there at that home, and they were there together praying.

This is a large number. Many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked on the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. And recognizing Peter's voice in her joy, she did not open the gate, but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate.

Now, here's what would happen to a person who had just escaped from prison. The guards who let this prisoner escape would be killed whatever the judgment was, or the consequence for that prisoner.

In this case, it was killing them, executing them. And so, whatever the judgment was for that prisoner would be passed along to the guards who were to secure him. So that means those four soldiers who were guarding Peter were going to try to find Peter, because if they don't find Peter, they're going to be all killed.

[24 : 01] And so they're running after, trying to find him. Peter's going up to the house of Mary. He's knocking on the door. Rhoda recognizes his voice. Doesn't let him in. He's saying, Rhoda, I'm standing out here.

There are four dudes trying to find me. And they said to her when she walked in, you're out of your mind.

You're out of your mind. And now quiz. What was the church praying for?

You remember what they were praying for? Peter's release. What happened? Peter was released. Rhoda reports that. That comes in to the group. And I'm sure the elder statesman said, Rhoda, you're out of your mind.

[25 : 12] Just sit down. We're praying for Peter's release. No, I'm telling you, Peter's outside. And she says she continued.

Peter kept continuing knocking probably softly, because he didn't want to bang it. He didn't want to draw attention, let the soldiers know where he was. And Peter, and they saw him and were amazed.

But he's going like motion him to remain silent. Like, don't yell. He described to them how the Lord brought him out of prison.

And he said, tell these things to James and to the brothers. Then he departed and went to another place. Power came through prayer. Now, some people will tell you, unless you have enough faith, your prayer will not be answered.

This whole church was gathered together, praying for the release of Peter. Peter was released and they still didn't even believe it. They didn't have enough faith to believe that Rhoda, you're not well.

[26 : 25] You're not well. And then they said, well, it's his ghost. There was a tradition that thought when a person passed away, that a ghost would be in their appearance. A spirit.

They didn't believe it. Power comes through prayer. But listen, we don't have enough faith to believe in order for him to act. He can act in spite of our faith.

But we submit to him anyway. And which is what the church was doing. They were submitting to him. Now, let's see the Gospel exposed in this story.

As unbelievers, we are chained to our human condition. We've received the sentence of death for violating God's laws.

We're like Peter in prison. But God sent His only Son into our dungeon to release us and set us free by taking our punishment for us.

[27 : 36] He sent the angel to Peter, but God sent His Son into that dungeon. He's released us. He took our punishment for us. And we put our faith in Christ. We're no longer slaves.

We're no longer prisoners. Romans 8.1 says therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Not some condemnation, not a little, not all. There's therefore not all condemnation. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. There is children.

We're set free. My wife struggles with kidney disease.

And she battles with this on a daily basis. We were living in Toronto, Canada, and her doctor told her she's in remission to die.

[28 : 41] In remission, she can go over to her medicine. So we go to Denver to visit her father. And on our way to Denver, she gets up to go to the restroom and she passes out.

Is there a physician on board kind of pass out? And we went to the doctor in Denver and this doctor said, don't do anything. Don't go anywhere. You've got to get help.

You are so sick. And we ended up 18 months in her dad's basement because she couldn't be moved. There were times I watched her.

Her kidney had debilitated her to such a degree. She couldn't even walk up the stairs to let her dog outside. She had to crawl up the stairs.

She went from the bedroom to the little couch, little kitchenette. That was her world for 18 months.

[29 : 46] I was traveling back and forth to Canada from Denver. She was there. Her dad would take care of her while I was gone. And I'd come home on the weekends, every weekend.

And we started a church, really on the weekend. We started a church. And the night before we were going to launch this church, I come home. We worked hard that day to get it ready.

The Lord gave us, get this, the Lord gave us a bar to meet in. No, it wasn't a bar Monday through Saturday or even Sunday.

It was abandoned. But it was a bar. Downtown, right in the city center, this bar. And we were able to set chairs in there and work it out.

We took the taps out. Okay, we cleaned it up. We got it all ready. And we started church that next day. And that night before, she had to go to the church.

[30 : 53] And I said, what? She's looking at her phone. Which was your only connection to the outside world. I was looking at Facebook.

And she's looking at Facebook and she's crying. She's going, this. This is why I'm crying. What? I think I've done something wrong. I probably have.

But in this case, I didn't know what it was. She said, I'm not crying. In this case, I didn't know what it was. She said, there's a church starting tomorrow.

It wouldn't be starting tomorrow unless you were here. You're here because I got sick. If my sickness caused a church to be born, it was worth it.

She said, I don't always feel that way. So she is a saint. She's holy, beautiful.

[31 : 59] But she still struggles. And she prayed, Lord, use this sickness to your glory. And he did. And this church, she calls it her church.

She's hardly been to it. Because she was in the basement. But she calls it her church. And it continues to this day.

And the Lord is working. And we're able to buy that building. That bar, we transformed it. It's got a children's center.

It's got a fellowship center. And it's got a worship center. Three levels. I don't know how we were able to buy it. We didn't have any money.

We had nobody had any money. But the Lord allowed us to do that. And we bought this building. And I was traveling back and forth to Canada.

[33 : 00] I came home on weekend. And we had baptisms. And we had baptisms, immersion, baptism. And we had it in the corner.

It was basically a horse trough. Because I don't know if you know this, but bars don't normally have baptistries in them. OK. Maybe you didn't know that.

But so we put this horse trough in the corner. And anyway, a baptize, I meet with her afterwards.

And I said, tell me your story. And she said, in this bar, she got baptized in this corner.

She said, in that corner, I used to sell drugs when it was a bar. And the Lord used this church to introduce me to Jesus Christ.

And today, I was baptized in that corner. All because somebody got sick and prayed. And said, Lord, use my sickness to your glory.

[34 : 04] Is anything too hard for the Lord? No. Don't quit.

Believe it. Pray to Him. He's powerful enough to move through your problem. He'll give you peace in the midst of it.

And He gets all the glory. So Lord, we thank You for Your Word. It provides to us insight into who You are, what You're calling us to do and to be.

We don't have enough faith to really believe. But we're asking You right now, Lord, whatever it is, a sin, a sickness, a sorrow, we give it to You and we pour it into You knowing You can answer this prayer.

To Your glory and honor, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.