

The Gospels in Harmony

Perfectly Un-Weavable

May 20, 2018

Welcome to where we're learning how to face the impossible!

When was the last time you prayed for the impossible? We all face the impossible in our lives: **medical**, **financial**, **relational**, vocational, or **aspirational** (the impossible dream). What is it in *your* life that appears to be impossible? How are you dealing: **hoping in hope** or **facing with faith**?



We saw that God's Word is like a shepherd's crook that we can't straighten. But, if we trust Him, **He'll straighten it, without changing it, by changing the way we see it.** (Ecc 1:15, 7:13; Prov 3:5-6) So, **we must seek to correct our perspective.**



We saw the stories that require us to sacrifice our traditions for Truth in order to weave 'em. Now, we'll examine the seemingly impossible.



In Capernaum, was it that **"a centurion came to him,"** or **"the centurion sent friends to say ... I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you."** (Mt 8:5; Lk 7:6-7) In the cemetery when Jesus sends a Legion of demons into the pigs, was Jesus met by **"two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs,"** or one? (Mt 8:28; Mk 5:2; Lk 8:27)



When Jesus sends out the Twelve, does He tell them to **"Take no ... sandals or a staff,"** or, to **"Take nothing ... except a staff ... [and to] Wear sandals."** (Mt 10:10; Mk 6:8-9) And, at Jericho, was a blind man healed **"as Jesus approached Jericho,"** (Lk 18:35) or **"as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho"**. (Mt 20:29)



These are un-weavable conflicts that seem perfectly impossible to defend. Gospel defenders who are currently confronting atheists on college campuses agree that these stories contradict, but **they try to defend God's Word with four reasons minor inconsistencies don't matter.**¹ God bless 'em; but, they're unintentionally throwin' in with the *atheists!* And *these* are the *good guys!*



[Jesus said] "Whoever can be **trusted with very little** can also be **trusted with much**, and whoever is **dishonest with very little** will also be **dishonest with much.**" – Luke 16:10 NIV

That doesn't go for God?

¹ "Narrative flow", "time compression", "flexible facts", and "honest but wrong eyewitness accounts"

“Come on; give the ol’ Guy some grace.” No! **God can hold His own.** Granted, it’s *impossible* to see how these could be straightened. But, **the impossible just requires a special key: perfect faith.**

[The Lord] said to me, “My **grace** is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness.**” – 2 Corinthians 12:9a NIV

We don’t associate weakness with perfection. But, **until we acknowledge ours, we hinder Him from empowering us.**

[The Apostle Paul writes] We are **glad** whenever we are **weak** but [sadly] **you are strong**; and our prayer is for your **perfection.** – 2 Cor 13:9 NIV

[So] Aim for **perfection** ... – 2 Corinthians 13:11b NIV

Our faith will be tested till we’re willing to rest in His power.

... the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its **perfect result**, so that **you may be perfect** [in your trust of God over self] and **complete**, [in your conviction that He’s perfect and we’re weak and blind] **lacking in nothing.** But if any of you **lacks wisdom**, let him ask of God ... and it **will** be given to him. But **he must ask in faith without any doubting**, [in His perfect love and power; and, our weakness] for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways [because he’s bracing himself by leaning on two competing things]. – James 1:2-8 NAS

When the going gets tough, the tough get going; but, **when it gets absolutely impossible, only the faithful remain standing.** So, how do we develop this type of faith?

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. – Romans 10:17 NIV

But, *how* can a Centurion come to Jesus *without coming* to Jesus?

How can *two* possessed men meet Jesus *and just one man* meet Him?

How can the Twelve take *and not take* sandals and a staff?

And, how can Jesus heal a blind man while He and His disciples are entering *and exiting* Jericho?

If we believe completely, utterly, perfectly that He’s perfect, then we’ll treat every word of every story as true. And when we do, these brainteasers provide a starting point from which to ask for answers and seek solutions ... *just like in life.* But, you must ask *without any doubt* that it’s the *perfect* Word of Truth; because, **the moment you doubt you’ll turn to yourself.**

God works deeply within when we face the impossible.

And, when we surrender control we can rest in the power of *His* control.

[The Lord] said to me, “My grace *is* sufficient for you, for *my power* is *made perfect* in *weakness*.” Therefore [Paul says] I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, [I’m blind and He’s God!] so that Christ’s power may rest on me. – 2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV

Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he *make to understand* the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? [Yes. Weak little children willing to seek] For **precept** [instruction] *must be* upon **precept**, **precept** upon **precept**, **line** upon **line**, **line** upon **line**, Here a little, there a little. [If we won’t *weave it* we can’t fully *receive it* because He can’t fully *teach it*] For with **stammering lips** [strange; foolish; with stops and repetitions (like the stories in the Gospels)] and **another tongue** [or: *differing tongues* (like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)] **He** [Christ] will speak to this people, to whom He said, “This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,” and, “This is the refreshing”; [“Jesus said, “I praise you, Father ... because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ... Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Mat 11:25-28)] yet **they** [religious scholars and teachers] **would not hear.** But the word of the Lord was to **them**, **precept** upon **precept**, **precept** upon **precept**, **line** upon **line**, **line** upon **line**, here a little, there a little, that **they** might **go** and **fall backward**, and be **broken** and **snared** and **caught**. Therefore hear the word of the Lord, you scornful men, who rule this people ... – Isaiah 28:9-14a NKJ

His perfect power will rest on some, and test the rest. Perfect faith admits its weakness and surrenders control. Because, **it’s perfect in its conviction that God is perfect.** Anything less is less than faith in the God of the impossible. Our faith *must* be tested to its core, in order to open our eyes to an eternal reality vastly greater than any of *our own making*. God loves us to pray in faith for the impossible ... *as long as we’re willing to receive His answer in faith.*

Perfect faith looks past our momentary desires, *however intense*. Because, **it looks at the impossible and sees something passing.** And, **it looks at His promises and sees something permanent.**

How can a Centurion come to Jesus *without coming* to Jesus? By escorting the Jewish elders through the crowd to Jesus, and then standing back, in humble respect, while they speak for him.

[Matthew says] a centurion **came** [*proserchomai* (a general term)] to him ... – Mat 8:5

And, Luke reports that he’s close enough to hear them tell Jesus he *deserves* this. So, he hurries home to send others to say:

... I **do not deserve** to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to **come** [*erchomai pros: appear before; come unto*] to you. – Luke 7:6b-7a

He came to Jesus, but he didn’t come to Him face-to-face.

How can *two* possessed men meet Jesus *and just one man* meet Him?

When he **arrived** at the other side [with several boats carrying many disciples (Mk 4:36)] ... **two demon-possessed men** coming from the tombs **met** [i.e. *confronted*] him. – Mat 8:28a

[And then] When Jesus **got out of the boat**, [one of them] **a man with an evil spirit** came from the tombs to meet him. ... When **he** saw Jesus [getting out of the boat] from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. – Mark 5:2, 6

[So] When Jesus **stepped ashore**, he was **met by a demon-possessed man** ... – Luke 8:27

Two cry out when the boats arrive, but one comes running when he sees Him get out of the boat, and falls before Him just as He steps ashore.



How can the Twelve take *and not take* sandals and a staff? He was sending them from Galilee to Judea, about 70 miles away (like here to Tukwila).

[He said] Take nothing for the journey [to Judea] **except a staff**—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. **Wear sandals** ... – Mark 6:8b-9a

[But] As you go, [around Judea (Mt 10:6, 23)] **preach this message**: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ ... **take no bag for the** [preaching portion of the] **journey ... or sandals or a staff** ... [these are the same instructions He gave the 72 regarding the towns in Galilee] – Mat 10:7-10

And, if they’re not received, Mark agrees that they are to ...

... **shake the dust off your feet** ...” [not their sandals] – Mark 6:11 NIV

So, **take sandals and a staff to Judea, but don’t use ‘em once you’re there** (for the sake of the prophetic symbolism that He’s employing).

How can Jesus heal a blind man while He and His disciples are entering *and exiting* Jericho?

... Jesus and his disciples, [were traveling] **together with a large crowd** ... [it’s the same term used when He feeds the 5,000 families] [And, when the blind man cried out] **Many** rebuked him ... – Mark 10:46b

Those who led the way rebuked him ... [Those who led the way?] – Luke 18:39a NIV

Jericho is 500’ by 1,500’ (like here to Johnny Carinos). Narrow road. Thousands in this parade. And Jesus’ advance team has to declare His coming, ensure He’s welcome, and prepare the way. Jesus is somewhere back in this miles long procession. So ...

As **Jesus** [section of this perhaps miles long procession] **approached Jericho** ... – Luke 18:35

Jesus’ advance team was exiting as He was entering. People entered and exited by the same city gate; so, Jesus is likely waiting for His advance team’s go-ahead before entering.

Every word is faithful and true and trustworthy and perfect. Perhaps you’re in an impossible place *right now*. **If you put your trust in Him, He’ll straighten things out.**

To our Father, the impossible is child’s play.