

Isaiah 36:1-37:1 Responding to the Arguments of Fear (Part 1)

Fear comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, but it presents common arguments against our confidence in God. When Hezekiah was confronted with anxiety-inducing arguments by Sennacherib, King of Assyria, his first response was to humble himself before the LORD in worship. When you face the arguments of fear a good opening salvo is to fall on your face before God in worship.

What are common arguments of fear? How can we answer them in Christ?

1) Common arguments of fear:

- a) Empirical “Evidence”: “Look around and judge for yourself. Evil is triumphing.”
 - i) 36:1—“Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.”—no friends to call on (cf. 36:6, Egypt is no good ally)
 - ii) 36:2—“a great army”—an overwhelming trouble (cf. 36:8-9, “I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able to set riders on them.”)
 - iii) What is staring you in the face? Do you have to stare back? Our focus is to be on Christ. Focusing on Christ clarifies the reality of your circumstances. Focusing on your circumstances obscures your vision of Christ.
- b) Faulty Theological Premises:
 - i) “Because you have displeased the LORD, He will forsake you to evil.”
 - (1) 36:7—“Is it not He whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed?”—the field commander mistook Hezekiah’s obedience to God’s law (one sanctuary) as impiety because he judged Hezekiah’s actions by pagan standards (pluralistic devotion)
 - (2) 2 errors corrected: First, obedience to God’s law may look strange to the world, but it is pleasing to God. Second, God disciplines, but never forsakes His people when they disobey.
 - (3) How do you deal with false guilt? Educate the con-science in God’s truth. How do you deal with real guilt? Repent. Confess. Receive.
 - ii) “The LORD is not able to resist the might of evil.”
 - (1) 36:18-20—“Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria . . . that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?”—the field commander equates the LORD with all of the false gods/idols of the other nations, so he does not recognize the supreme authority of God
 - (2) Do you really believe that your trouble has Jesus on the run? Isaiah 50:2 “Is My hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?”
- c) Appeals to Emotion:
 - i) “Trusting God and resisting evil will bring pain.”
 - (1) 36:12—“Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?”
 - (2) We are an analgesic culture. We don’t want to feel pain, whether physical or psychical. Paul said, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12).

- ii) "Submitting to evil and turning from God will bring pleasure."
 - (1) 36:16-17—"Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards."
 - (2) We are an impetuously hedonistic culture. Hedonists defined the good as ultimate pleasure. Americans de-fine the good as immediate pleasure. Jesus said, "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).
 - iii) We need an eschatological perspective on pain and pleasure: "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end" (Psalm 73:16-17).
- 2) Answering fear with humble worship of the LORD.
 - a) Humbling ourselves before God—37:1 "He tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth."—Pride judges God's ways and complains against Him; humility reposes in God's wisdom, righteousness, and grace
 - b) Worship—37:1 "[He] went into the house of the LORD."
 - i) "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10).
 - ii) "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.'"
 - c) Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:2). In Christ you can respond to the arguments of fear by worshipping God.