

Isaiah 37:1-20 (NKJV)

1 And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard *it*, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

2 Then he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.

3 And they said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah: 'This day *is* a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but *there is* no strength to bring them forth.

4 It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of *the* Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up *your* prayer for the remnant that is left.' "

5 So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said to them, "Thus shall you say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: "Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.

7 Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." ' "

8 Then *the* Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish.

9 And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "He has come out to make war with you." So when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

10 "Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

11 Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who *were* in Telassar?

13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?' "

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers,

and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying:

¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, You *are* God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

¹⁷ Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.

¹⁸ Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,

¹⁹ and have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* not gods, but the work of men's hands--wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them.

²⁰ Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD, You alone."

Hezekiah is the example of a person just like us. He didn't always get it right. In fact he seemed to start off very badly, doing exactly the wrong things. But He was changing. He was being shaped by God in his failures. He was coming around to a new way of thinking. God had to wipe out a lot of his alternatives before He got the point. But God often does that for His children. He has often done that for us.

Finally in chapter 37 we see some good instincts.

Hezekiah hears the message from the King of Assyria. We have been calling this a message from the devil. That is what it was. The King of Assyria was just the devil's puppet.

So he heard the words of Jerusalem's promised destruction from a guy who looked like he could do it. And this time, Hezekiah did the right thing right off the bat. He didn't send **a message to Egypt**. He had already tried that and it didn't work. He didn't try to **bribe the enemy**. He had already tried that and it didn't work. No. at this point Hezekiah shows on the outside what he feels on the inside. The Jewish people were very demonstrative of their emotions. They didn't leave you wondering how they received bad news. They would grab their clothing and rip it. It expressed their anguish or grief. And then to make things perfectly clear, they would dress the way they felt. They would

put on sackcloth. Our equivalent would be burlap. It quite literally was material they made sacks out of. They would weave goat hair or camel hair into bags. And then they would store their grain in those bags.

The cloth was very coarse and very dark. But oddly enough it was very good clothing against the elements.

When you would see someone of status wearing sackcloth you didn't have to ask how they were doing. You would know their soul was in great turmoil. Or at least that is what they were seeking to convey. They were suffering some kind of grief. Maybe it was the grief of losing a loved one. Maybe it was the grief of remorse over sin. Or maybe it was the grief over some other kind of great loss.

Sometimes I think sackcloth should make a comeback. It might be good if we would make such clear declarations of our state of being. Then if our grief was legitimate, others would know they could share it with us. And if the grief was of our own making, they could come alongside and give the help we need. Maybe we should make sackcloth pins. Then we could put one of them on to let everyone know where we are.

Anyway, Hezekiah was grieved inside and out. His people were being threatened and his God was being blasphemed. If any man ever needed an answer from God, Hezekiah did.

We don't need to go far here for an application. When we are stressed out by our life's situation and we really need to know what we should do, we need to hear from God. And the more desperate our straits, the greater our need for God's direction and His counsel and sometimes just His affirmation.

So Hezekiah does what we should always do.

What did he do? He went into the house of the Lord. He went where He could gain access to God. He went where he could be closest to God. Where is that for us? Well actually it can be anywhere, but it is best that we are away from all the other distractions of life. We can go outside or in some quiet room or for a ride. But we don't need to go to a building. The Holy Spirit is in our bodies. We are His tabernacle now. So He has come to us.

Now back then they didn't have a whole lot of the Bible. It was still being written. Back then when you wanted to know what God said, you went to one of God's prophets. Now being a prophet was a very serious thing. A false prophet could do a whole lot more damage to sincere God seekers back then

than one can do now. Now **almost everything** can be checked out with the Word of God. Back then, not so much so.

So Hezekiah send all the spiritual authorities and the person over the King's household to find Isaiah. They were all dressed in sackcloth so the stage would be well set when these dignitaries finally got in front of Isaiah. And they were to deliver a message. This is it:

"Thus says Hezekiah: 'This day is a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but *there is no strength to bring them forth.*' "

⁴ It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of *the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up *your prayer for the remnant that is left.*' "*

Do we get what Hezekiah is saying here? He is saying that God is being blasphemed. He was being spoken of evilly, as if God is evil, as if God is not good, as if God cannot be depended upon. And why? Because of Hezekiah. Because of the Judean people. Because of the lack of trust that Judea had shown toward their God.

Now they are at their ropes end. Now they need to enter the arena but they have no strength to. Now they need to stand up to the challenge, but they are all out of energy and resources. They are ready to be born but the mother is all out of energy.

Hezekiah is talking about all of our lives when we have lived dependent upon our own flesh to live the Christian life. We are all out of juice. We just cannot turn the corner on our sin. We cannot express faith where we know we ought to. We can't do what needs done.

Isn't this a wonderful statement by Hezekiah. He is simply telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We cannot do what needs done. We need God. We think of our hymn.

I need thee every hour most holy one.

O make me thine indeed Thou blessed Son

I need Thee oh I need Thee

Every hour I need Thee

O bless me now my Savior

I come to Thee.

That is what Hezekiah is doing.

In fact, Hezekiah was so low that he could not dignify himself by calling upon **his** God or **our** God. Look what he says.

4 It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of *the* Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up *your* prayer for the remnant that is left.' "

Have you ever blown it so bad that you had trouble imagining that God would even listen to your prayer? Have you ever thought that your failure was unforgiveable? Have you ever thought your state to be so low that God would not even care about you? You aren't alone. Many people of God have felt that way. And while we cannot give way to these ideas in our doctrine, we can sometimes accurately describe our feelings in this way.

Look at this. Hezekiah didn't even appeal to God to do this for His people. He never said, your people are such wonderful people, God, that you should do this thing. No. Hezekiah appealed to God to do this for **His own honor**.

Maybe the Lord, **Isaiah's God**, not Hezekiah's, but Isaiah's God might hear the words of Rabshakeh

Maybe He will consider that Rabshakeh was sent to reproach God

Maybe God will rebuke the message that Rabshakeh spewed out against God.

So Isaiah, will you please just pray for the few of God's people that are left.

Oh how this request ought to fill our hearts with hope. It shows us so much about ourselves and about our God. Hezekiah was at the bottom of his game. He had zero self confidence. He had failed pretty miserably in his leadership decision. Here he is the King of Judea and this is the best he can do. And we see that he has surrendered. He has given up on **any help** except the **help that comes from God**. He has given up on **every resource** but **the resource that comes from God**. He comes offering nothing to anyone. He just lays out his need in as brutal a fashion as it could be laid out. Can't we do that? No matter how bad off you are, can't you do that? No matter how much you have failed, can't you do that. You don't even have to be convincing. Just lay out your need honestly. Look back on your life. Aren't those the turning points of your life? When you came to God brutally honestly with your need. Oh how wonderful our God is to meet us when we come to Him **just as we are without one plea but that His blood was shed for me**.

Isaiah doesn't even feel he is qualified to pray this prayer to God. But he knows it needs prayed. So he brings it to the one person who knows God.

Now, think about this from Isaiah's vantage point. He has been speaking for God all this time. He is laying out the bad news day after day. He has been mocked. He has been the town joke. But he has stood for God. He has not strayed. He has not given in to the temptations to relent. He said to God, here I am, **send** me, and he meant it. He too must have wondered if he would ever be vindicated. He must have wondered if God would ever reward his efforts. He may have wondered if he would ever see the bad times he kept promising to Jerusalem.

And this day he experiences the fruit of his labor. The king and his dignitaries are now knocking on his door needing **his** help. Suddenly he has become the most important person in the kingdom. Why? Only one reason. He knows God.

Faithfulness to God will always pay off in the long run. It doesn't matter how many people ignore what God says now. It doesn't matter how many do whatever they feel. It doesn't matter how long they seem to be able to get away with it. Stick with your faith in God. Be loyal to Him. Surrender your life to Him. Obey Him. All the other paths will run out of steam if the person is chosen by God, or it will lead to hell if they are not. Choices to sin will be regretted either because they have dishonored Christ or they have led to one's eternal judgment. Cling to faith. This was Isaiah's day to shine. His faithfulness to God finally paid off. He was the **go-to person** in the time of need by all those who didn't take spiritual things seriously. One thing is sure. They are taking them seriously now.

So the servants did just what they were told. Now if you were Isaiah, how hard would it have been not to add a lecture here? How hard would it have been not to make them pay for not treating you with respect all these years. How hard would have it been not to stick that jab in for all the ways they have made you pay?

Well, when you represent God, you had better stick to what God says. When you speak for God you had better speak for God alone.

⁶ And Isaiah said to them, "Thus shall you say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: "Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.

⁷ Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." ' "

Up to this point Hezekiah did not know what God had in mind. Last week we talked about how, **in reality**, he could have gone to bed and not lost a minute's sleep had he known how it would turn out. But he **didn't** know. Now he does. And from this point forward there appears to be no need for Hezekiah to show **his** faithfulness to **God** before God shows **His** faithfulness to **Hezekiah**.

Hezekiah did nothing but call out to God through Isaiah in his honest need. That is all. And this is what God does.

8 Then the Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish.

9 And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "He has come out to make war with you." So when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

Look what happened here. It was exactly what **Isaiah said** that **God said** would happen. A rumor. God used a message in the wind to turn around a great army. It is ironic that God used one of the devil's favorite tools to reap destruction against the King of Assyria.

When people talk about God and the devil in heavy battle I have to laugh. I think we all should. The warfare that **we** must do is serious. Evidently the warfare the **angels** do is serious. But it isn't because God needs any help with his enemy. That is laughable. He can get whole armies to move on a rumor. There is no battle between God and the Devil. The Devil is on borrowed time and his time will end when the our Savior speaks the word. Don't ever forget that. God is Sovereign over everything. Everything.

So with this distraction the King of Assyria did not want to appear weak. He clearly **was**. But he can't allow his arrogance to show weakness. So he sends his lackies to Hezekiah.

10 "Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

11 Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered?

And then he goes over a list of lands that Assyria has conquered.

Here we go again. Bla bla bla.

The God of Israel has just done exactly what He said he would do. He removed a great army based on a rumor. But the enemy keeps at it. Peter tells us about this strategy.

1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

From what I understand lions often roar to scare animals out of their safety. It is similar to the screech of a hawk. It is intended to scare their prey to come out of safety and make themselves a target of this predator. That is what the King of Assyria is doing. He is roaring to frighten Judea from their position so he can pounce on them.

We need to realize that the threats of the enemy are empty threats to a believer. While he can cause us harm, he cannot do us **permanent** harm. He cannot undo us. He cannot take that which is most important to us. And we must stand in faith with sober clear headed thinking about these things. We cannot give way to the panic he wants to create in our heart and mind and life. Now watch what happens next. It is wonderful. It is what happens when God turns a person around in repentance. This is what begins to happen when we say to God, my life is yours.

¹⁴ And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying:

¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, You *are* God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

¹⁷ Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.

¹⁸ Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,

¹⁹ and have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* not gods, but the work of men's hands--wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them.

²⁰ Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD, You alone."

Hezekiah no longer needed to go to Isaiah. His faith in God was growing. He had already heard God's message. And He has rested His faith upon what God had said. He no longer needs to know **what God says** about His situation.

Now he needs to **get in line** with what God says. He needs to begin to pray based upon the promises of God and expectantly look for God to do mighty things. He needs to act in the belief in God.

This time when Hezekiah went to the house of the Lord, he did not send messengers to get God's word. That would have been an act of unbelief. No, Hezekiah calls out to God. Let's look at that prayer. Look how it starts.

16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, *the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.*

What is it called when we make much of the attributes of God? The word is praise. Praise is thanking God for **who He is**. It is a show of appreciation for the **person of God**. That is how Jesus taught us to pray. We begin with praise. I think it is because praise puts everything into perspective. It puts our problems and God's ability to solve them into perspective. It puts what really matters into perspective. It helps us to get our eyes off of ourselves and onto God. It is the perfect way to begin prayer.

And look at what Hezekiah appeals to. God is not a mere idol. God is the untrue assumption in the Rabshakeh's argument. God is not an idol for a group of people. He transcends His creation. God made everything. He made everything every so-called god is made of. He is the creator. That really puts things in perspective. Does it put **our problems** in perspective? Really, how important is our problem when we bring it before the one who made the planets? We are to bring them to God. And He cares for us. But we really really need to consider who we are addressing.

Hezekiah is batting 1000 so far. He is doing what **we need to do** when **we** face a severe threat.

17 Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.

The most powerful prayers you will ever pray are for God to glorify Himself in your situation. You can always know that this prayer will be powerfully answered by God. We don't know exactly **HOW** it will be answered. It could be answered by our martyrdom. Sometimes that is the result. But it is often a wonderful display of His power, however it is shown.

The greatest problem with Sennacherib's threats was not that they were threatening the **people** of God. That is a big deal to God. But it was not as

great at the dishonor he was bringing to the **person** of God. He was just like Goliath. And David knew that. Stand for God's Honor and you will always be on the winning side, you will always be praying God's will. Again, Hezekiah is batting 1000. Oh to be like Hezekiah in this setting. He really shines.

And I love the next section. This has got to be like music to our souls.

18 Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,

19 and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands--wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them.

Hezekiah is not afraid to be honest with God. I mean really, is there anything dumber than being fake with God? C'mon. That is just stupid. Believers are free to be real. It isn't like God can't handle it.

Hezekiah is laying out his concerns. He is telling God why he is having a problem with this particular thing. But he also mixes it with the truth. He is saying, yes Lord, the king of Assyria really has shown a capacity to do what he threatens. But there is a difference. Those people only had idols. We have you. And you are different. You are the assumption in the argument that is false. You are not like the other so called Gods. And it is because all these gods were false that the enemy could have his way. He cannot have His way against you. That is the advantage that good doctrine gives the people of God. While they tell the truth about their situations, they can also tell the truth about God.

Then Hezekiah ends his prayer.

20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD, You alone."

Therefore's are wonderful things. They are statements that reason has value. Truth matters. How we think is important. This therefore is a cap stone based on a solid foundation of reason. Since you are the only true God, since this creation of yours is speaking against you, since this human looks like he can accomplish what he says, since you alone are God and are the wildcard in all his reasoning, therefore save us.

Hezekiah is appealing to the reasons that this thing he is asking for will glorify God. And what is the end game? God's glory. That the earth may know that You are the Lord, You alone.

Is that what we want our lives to say? Do we care more about how God is regarded than how we are regarded? Do we care more that He gets glory than

we get acceptance? Do we care that God's kingdom is built up more than our ego's are stroked? Do we care about God's glory more than our safety or even our very lives? That is when powerful stuff happens. When we are expendable in the service of God, when **God looking good** matters more to us than life itself. Those are the people through whom God does mighty things.