

# Mighty to Save

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**Bible Verse:** Isaiah 36-37  
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Well, as I said, we are going to study Psalm 76 this week and next and take this opportunity this evening to examine the background of this magnificent Psalm. If you look at Psalm 76 as you turn there with me just to kind of bounce off of it like a trampoline into what we want to talk about, the message of Psalm 76 can be summarized in this way, it is simply stated: God is known and he is to be feared. God is known and he is to be feared.

Look at verse 1 of Psalm 76 where it says,

1 God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel.

And being known and being great in verse 12 it says at the end,

12 He will cut off the spirit of princes; He is feared by the kings of the earth.

Now this Psalm is looking back at a historical event that is recorded for us elsewhere in Scripture, looking back at a time when God slew the army of Assyria when they had been laying siege to Jerusalem. Look at verse 4 as it speaks about the greatness of God and you can see that it makes a reference to this. It says,

4 You are resplendent, More majestic than the mountains of prey. 5 The stouthearted were plundered, They sank into sleep; And none of the warriors could use his hands.

An allusion to an army that was besieging Jerusalem and they were defenseless when God rose up in wrath against them, and it says at verse 6,

6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep. 7 You, even You, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

Now, all of this is pointing to a great and magnificent act in history by God on behalf of his people and it's important for us to always remember that when we talk about

Scripture, when we talk about what God has done, that Scripture in describing these historical acts is not speaking in allegory, it's not speaking in hypotheticals, it's speaking about things that happened in time and space that God actually did in the realm of human history, and that is so important for us to remember. It is not a statement, it is not a good Christian statement to say, "Well, God could do these things if he wanted to"; that doesn't really bring any power of comfort to the human heart or declare his name with a sense of finality and certainty and power to say, "Well, he could if he wanted to and here's an allegory of what it might look like." You can see that it is a far different matter to say, "God did this in history. This was actual time and space event of something that God did, and because of that his name is to be known, because of that his name is to be feared."

And you can work that out from a New Testament perspective as well. Why do we worship the Lord Jesus Christ, why do we magnify his name? Not simply because some stories that are told in Scripture but because he literally left heaven in order to come to earth and take on human flesh. He literally walked on the earth for some 30 to 33 years. He literally died on a cross. He literally was buried in a grave. He literally rose from the dead. And he literally did that, he actually in time and space did that so as to redeem a people for himself from their sins. This actually happened. This is not allegory. This is not fable. As Scripture declares, we do not follow cleverly devised tales but Peter says, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

So our faith is grounded on the revealed word of God which speaks to us about matters that occurred in time and space history and, therefore, our faith is well-founded. It is grounded in reality in the way that things really are, and God shows who he really is by things that he has really done in time and space, and the power of that is magnificent. Psalm 76 is pointing back to such a historical event and it is from that historical event that its call to know and fear God is based and so what we want to do this evening is we want to look at what Scripture says about that event that causes God to be known and to be feared.

As I said, the background of Psalm 76 is most likely the act of God that destroyed the Assyrian army and that setting is important and so tonight we're going to review it and to do that, we're going to turn to the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 36, and I'd invite you to turn there as we kind of get started here this evening. It's a great privilege for us to do this. It would be a great act sometime to preach through the book of Isaiah. I don't know if the Lord would ever have that for us here but Isaiah, we should say, is one of the great prophets of all time, exceeded perhaps only by the Lord Jesus himself who is our Prophet, Priest, and King. Isaiah's book is one of the great monuments in Scripture of the sovereignty and compassion of God, and to oversimplify his 66 chapter book, can be divided into two main parts. I need to give you just a little, the most basic of context for what we're going to look at this evening. In the first 35 chapters, Isaiah proclaims God's judgment against Israel because of their sin, and the first 35 chapters and it sets forth that that judgment will come in two stages through the nation of Assyria and then by the nation of Babylon. That judgment would be severe and it would look for all of the world like God was abandoning his people in the midst of it because the exile and the devastation would be so great, and yet as Isaiah rebukes the people, you see that their sin

is so great that nothing less than severe judgment from God could meet the needs of the spiritual situation. So there is a severe judgment that is coming.

In the second part of the book, the second main part of the book in chapters 40 to 66, Isaiah speaks words of comfort. In fact, if you look at Isaiah 40, you see that it starts with that exact message. Isaiah 40:1 says,

1 "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God. 2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins."

And the twin message of the book of Isaiah is that judgment is going to come and yet after the judgment, there will be a time of comfort and restoration to the people of God. The judgment that will come at the hands of the nations is simply God using those nations to discipline Israel for its sin. In a more distant day after the judgment has passed, after God has expended his anger on his people, he would restore Israel yet once again. So the first 35 chapters speaking of judgment – this is a gross oversimplification but just for the purposes of a broad understanding – the first 35 chapters, a message of judgment, the last chapters, 40 through 66, a message of comfort to Israel about a future restoration that will take place after the judgment has been spent.

Now, in between those two sections is a historical bridge, you might say, a bridge of history, a bridge of historical narrative, and in Isaiah 36 through 39, the prophet recounts how the Assyrian army was broken when God destroyed 185,000 soldiers in one single night and the question is: how is that a comfort to Israel in the midst of the discipline that is about to come when a foreign nation is coming upon them and sending them off into exile and the people are suffering greatly? How does it comfort them to know what God did to the Assyrian army when God flexed his power to judge them? How is that a message of comfort and how might it relate to us here this evening? Well, it shows that the rise of the foreign armies that were going to discipline Israel was not a sign of weakness on God's part. God had the power to dispose of them in a single evening if that's what he chose to do, and so the rise of these foreign armies, the rise of the disciplining hand of invasion and exile, was not a sign that God had lost control. It was not a sign that God had lost his power at all as shown by the fact when it pleased him to do so, he judged 185,000 of them and slew them in a single evening. That means this as you read the Old Testament, it's very important and helpful to remember this overarching theme, that God will discipline his people and the fact that they suffer for a time is not a sign of his ultimate abandonment, it is not a sign that he is too weak to deal with the situation. Instead, instead the rise and invasion of these foreign armies was something completely different. It was part of God's sovereign plan to vindicate his holiness among his people. Not a sign of weakness, a display of his holiness, a display of his holiness designed to teach his people the lesson that they are to revere him, to humble themselves before him, to obey him, to put their faith in him. That's a much different message to take away from what is happening than to see it as a sign of the weakness of God.

The defeat of Israel that we're about to look at shows something that is fundamental and yet very profound. Mark it carefully, the defeat of Israel of which we are about to read which Psalm 76 extols, shows something awfully important. It shows that God is mighty to save. God is mighty to save and if you're taking notes, that's the title of tonight's message, "Mighty to Save." Mighty to save and, beloved, that is not a theological abstraction, that is not whistling in the dark in the midst of trials, that is reality. That is who God really is. That is the real nature of the real God as he rules over his people and we'll come back to this application at the end of the message, if I don't forget, but that has an immediate sense and it's an immediate point of interest for us here this evening to keep that very point in mind.

As you know, as we've studied multiple times in the past as Scripture speaks so clearly into our lives and speaks and reveals the nature of God to us, God is an immutable God. God does not change. The book of Hebrews says in chapter 13 that Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, today and forever." So when we look back 2,700 years into history to see what God did to the Assyrian army as we are going to do this evening, we realize something very very important that is essential for your spiritual well-being to take, understand and rest in. In your circumstances of difficulty, in your season of weakness, be it physical, be it professional, be it relational, be it spiritual, and you pray and you pray and nothing seems to change, beloved, you must come back to this fundamental point lest you fall into discouragement, lest you fall into a doubt of which God is not worthy. The fact that God sees fit to leave you in a time of weakness for a time, for a season, is not an indication that he has lost his power to deliver you. It is not an indication of his indifference. How could it be, my beloved, how could it be that Christ would be indifferent to the people for whom he died in order to save them? How could it be? How could the thought ever cross our mind that somehow our loving gracious Savior who shed his blood on the cross to save us from sin, had somehow become indifferent to us? How could it be that the God who created the heavens and the earth, the God who slew Egypt at the Red Sea, the God who slew Assyria on a single night, their great army, how could it be that the God who in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ conquered death and sin and health itself, how could it be that he had lost his power and how could it be that the one who loved us enough to lay his life down for us had lost his capacity or his desire to care for us? Do you see how important this is? It is so important for us to remember these things, to call them to mind, so that we understand our times of weakness and sorrow and grief from a proper perspective. Whatever else is going on in our time of weakness, whatever else is happening to us in our time of sorrow, it is not not not not not not, it could not possibly be an indication that God was unable to deliver us. It could not possibly be an indication that God no longer cared. It could not possibly be an indication that God has turned his back on his people. Something else, then, is going on which we may not be able to discern in the moment but we can rest in the power of God, we can rest in the love of God and say, "Whatever else is going on here, no matter how much this hurts, no matter how much I don't understand, God is still on his throne, he still loves his people, he is working out a purpose even if I don't see and understand it." We need to just take a moment to let that sink in because our tendency, is it not, to walk by sight and not by faith? Our tendency is to forget the things that we know to be true and to respond to our circumstances rather than to the revealed truth upon which we rest our eternal souls

and to which we have entrusted everything to. We forget that unless we come back and remember. Psalm 76 calls us to remember and its background is the setting of which we have been speaking.

Now, I have you in the book of Isaiah. I actually need you to turn to 2 Kings 18 because what we're going to read about in Isaiah 36 and 37 is an episode in the life of King Hezekiah who reigned in the southern kingdom of Judah from about 715 to 685 BC, just in general rough terms. In 2 Kings 18, we see a summary statement about Hezekiah and we want to just kind of let that be our introduction to the historical events that we are going to read about here this evening. 2 Kings 18:1,

1 Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. 6 For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.

So we see in this description of King Hezekiah, this overview of his reign, the length of his reign and the spiritual nature of his reign. He did right in the sight of the Lord. He was one of the few good guys, one of the few good kings in the whole history of Israel, and as we come to Isaiah 36, we're going to read about an episode in the life of Hezekiah. He faced a severe challenge.

Isaiah 36 now with that background in place. Isaiah 36. This good king almost smack dab in the middle of his reign, faces a severe challenge from the king of Assyria and we read about this in Isaiah 36. He is about to be severely tested and what we want to see is what happened and how did Hezekiah respond to it. So what happened? Isaiah 36:1,

1 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field.

So Assyria is advancing on the capital city of Jerusalem, other cities in the kingdom have fallen to them, and now they are approaching. The representative of the king of Assyria has come to make demands upon the city for its surrender and a delegation from Hezekiah goes out to meet him in verse 3,

3 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.

And Assyria now presents its demands in verse 4,

4 Then Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, "What is this confidence that you have? 5 I say, 'Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words.' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?'"

So this delegate, this representative of the king of Assyria comes and makes a demand upon Hezekiah through his representatives and says, "It is time for you to surrender." That is his demand. He is demanding surrender as part of his military campaign that threatened the entire nation.

So delegations from both sides are meeting. There is this foreign summit, you might say, and what happens, we won't go through all of it, I'll just give you the high points, this Assyrian representative uses propaganda with a simple message to the king and his people. I'll slow down a bit to let you catch up with me a bit here. The overall arching message that he is delivering on behalf of the king of Assyria is this, "Resistance to us is futile. God is not with you and even if he was, he could not save you." As you're going to see in just a moment, this was a blasphemous assault on the greatness and character of God that is being made by these foreign ministers on behalf of the king of Assyria. So he is looking to undermine the confidence, undermine the morale of Judah so that they will surrender without a fight. That's what he's looking to accomplish as you will see now as we look at what he has to say.

He gives him three different messages and they are somewhat contradictory, even. They are a little bit inconsistent with one another. Look at verse 7. And so the question is, he says, "Why are you resisting me?" In verse 7, he holds out one of the possible answers that they might offer in response. He says,

7 "... If you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar?'"

What he is saying here is, "If you think you're relying on the Lord your God, you need to understand he's angry with you. Your king has torn down the high places where he was previously worshiped. God is angry with you, he's not going to defend you." Now, it's not important to what the Assyrian message was that Hezekiah did what the Lord wanted him to do when he was tearing down those high places. We already saw that from 2 Kings 18. Just remember this is propaganda that is going on. This is mental warfare that is being waged and whether it's true or not is secondary to the effect of fear that he's trying to produce in the hearts of those who are hearing what he has to say.

He goes on in verse 10 and he says, "Not only is God angry with you guys, he's on our side." Verse 10, he says,

10 "Have I now come up without the LORD'S approval against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"

"So not only – here's the message that he's giving to the representatives of Hezekiah in the hearing of some of the people – not only is God angry with you guys, he's on our side and you tell me that you're relying on him? That can't go well for you. There is a double edged sword here. He's against you, he's on our side. He actually sent us to conquer you. You might as well surrender now and spare us all the battle that you will most certainly lose."

And he goes on speaking throughout chapter 36 and there's nothing new under the sun with political propaganda and military propaganda; mental warfare is often as important as the physical warfare that takes place. But in verse 18 of chapter 36, he goes on to make another accusation against the Lord himself and he says in verse 18, he says,

18 Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us."

He says, "Here's what your king is going to tell you, your king is going to tell you, 'The Lord will deliver us,' and, therefore he will try to strengthen your morale, strengthen your resolve against us by giving you the sense that the Lord will act on our behalf to deliver us." And the Assyrian representative says, "When your king says that, don't listen to him because your God cannot deliver you from us." Remember I told you, I said his message doesn't have to be consistent. He's laying these things out one after another and making it very difficult for them to even process it and think.

Look at what he says in verse 18, but before we do that, let's just step back for a moment, take a little breath, catch our breath here as we are covering a lot of ground really quickly here, and just remember what we said at the start about the greatness of God, the power of God, the unlimited omnipotence of a holy God. When you remember that, then you are struck with fear at the blasphemy of what we are about to read, the blasphemy that comes from the lips of this pagan representative of the Assyrian king. Look at it again with me in verse 18, this high blasphemy against God himself when he says, "Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us,'" and he goes and he tries to make the case about why that's not a legitimate trust for Judah to exercise and he says this,

Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

He says, "We have been conquering nations like a hot knife through butter for the past few years here and no one has stopped us. What makes you think your God can stop us?" So he says in verse 19,

19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand?

Reciting prior conquest by Assyria that led up to this siege on Jerusalem, and he says in verse 20,

20 Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?

So you see what's going on here. This is a highly sophisticated, well-reasoned piece of propaganda that would most certainly demoralize a weak nation hiding and trembling somewhat behind their fortified walls with this army of 185,000 soldiers or more gathered around them just waiting to hear the battle cry to charge. His goal in everything that he said was to demoralize Judah so that they would surrender and go into exile without resistance.

That's his propaganda piece but the truth, the truth was different. God had not left them. God had brought this challenge to them so that they would see his deliverance so that in the moment of their greatest weakness, at the apex of the power of their enemy, God would display his power to deliver and it would be clearly shown and established that they did not deliver themselves and that God had defeated the greatest army on the earth at the time, and in that great act which occurred in history in time and space, in that great reality which we will see in just a few moments, God would display his greatness and power. And what's the take-away when God displays his greatness and power? It's this: it's that God is known, God has made himself known and God is a God to be feared. He is a God to be revered. He is a God to be worshiped. He is a God to be humbled before because he does things that no one else can do.

And with the challenge laid out in chapter 36, Isaiah now in recounting this historical narrative turns and tells what Hezekiah's response was. He shows Hezekiah's response of faith that we are going to look at now, and there's a reason for doing this and it's easy to miss this. He's not simply telling the story of Hezekiah's faith so that we would know the facts about what Hezekiah did in response to this challenge. Oh, beloved, beloved, what he is doing for the people of Israel in the time that Isaiah wrote his book of prophecy, he is showing them what kind of faith everyone in Israel should respond to this God with. He is using Hezekiah as an illustration of the faith that should be used to respond to the entire 66 books of his prophecy. He describes Hezekiah's faith to teach about the nature of faith and we who read it now 2,700 years later, we read it and we see indications of what our own faith should look like. We are called up by this righteous man of God, by his response of faith in time of his greatest trial, in time of his greatest weakness. What does faith look like in that? To say that there is this God who is known and this God who



is to be feared, what does the response of faith to that God look like? Well, we're going to see from chapter 37 here.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 37. Isaiah 37:1. The delegation came back. Actually, look at the end of chapter 36 just so you can see the context here. Hezekiah's delegation comes back and reports back to him. Verse 22,

22 ... Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

So the Assyrian representative had made these demands and had delivered his propaganda to them. They were helpless to respond. They tear their clothes in a sign of grief and repentance and they come back to their king and they give him the report. "Here's what happened, king. The news is really bad. They are demanding our surrender and here are the terms upon which he made that demand upon us."

So now in chapter 37, verse 1, we come to King Hezekiah and, beloved, we want to enter sympathetically into the position that King Hezekiah was facing. He did not have the human power to repel this assault and the responsibility for the nation, the people are looking to him for leadership. Leadership is often very lonely and here is a lonely time for Hezekiah and what does he do? The weight of the nation is on him. There is a demand for surrender on a horizontal level. If he doesn't capitulate to it, he is sentencing his people to certain death and destruction. That's a pretty heavy load and so what does he do? How does he respond in faith to this situation? Chapter 37, verse 1 says,

1 And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD.

Sackcloth was a sign of repentance. He was confessing prior sin that he had committed. To say that he was righteous, a righteous king, is not to say that he was sinless, and Hezekiah had made an act of folly earlier before this had all come to pass, he had made an alliance with the nation of Egypt seeking their protection in case Assyria would come against them.

Look at chapter 30, verse 1. Isaiah declares a message of warning, of judgment against the nation. He says in chapter 30, verse 1,

1 "Woe to the rebellious children," declares the LORD, "Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin; 2 Who proceed down to Egypt Without consulting Me, To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!"

This was a rebuke to Hezekiah and if you look at chapter 36 now, just stay with me, I know we're trying to stitch together a lot of information in a short period of time here,

chapter 36, verse 6, you can see that the Assyrian representative points out this alliance that Hezekiah had made. He says in verse 5, he says,

5 Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?

He says in verse 6,

6 Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

So here's what happened: Hezekiah earlier had made a military alliance with Egypt to help defend the country against incursion by Assyria. Now Assyria is on his doorstep and it's obvious that Egypt is not able to deliver. Based on that prior message of rebuke from Isaiah in chapter 30, he realizes that that alliance that he made was sinful and so he tears his clothes, he covers himself with sackcloth and repentantly enters into the house of the Lord, and from that posture of repentance, he sent for Isaiah the prophet, the one who could give him the word of God in this time of desperation.

Verse 2. Chapter 37, verse 2. Hezekiah is repentantly seeking out the word of God and in verse 2,

2 Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. 4 Perhaps the LORD your God will hear the words of 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, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'"

Stop there. Hezekiah examines his life, turns to the Lord in repentance recognizing that he had sinned in what he had done earlier with this prior alliance. He humbly goes to the prophet, humbly turns to the word of God, you could say, and says, "I am helpless here. I need your deliverance. Will you please help me in my time of desperation?" Utter humility, confessing sin, turning to the true God in believing faith that he's able to do something if he only chooses to do so. Humble, repentant faith in the power of God to deliver.

Beloved, in your time of hardship that many of you are going through right now, faith is of the same character, it is cut from the same cloth, humbly, repentantly turning to God based on who he has shown himself to be in his word and humbly asking for his help, now in the New Testament era in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not trying to figure it out in advance. Gladly, freely confessing your utter weakness and saying, "God, help me." This is what faith looks like. This is the faith that God responds to.

And what is the response? Isaiah responds to the king's messengers in verse 5 and now the story starts to take its turn. Now God is starting to speak through Isaiah. Now you're starting to see the way that the worm is going to turn in a way that humanly was impossible. Verse 5,

5 So [in other words, in this manner] the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6 Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD, "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'""

In this darkest hour, in this hour where there was no human way forward, God's power, God's word provided hope that was humanly impossible.

Now, Sennacherib had sent a threatening letter to Hezekiah. We won't take the time to read the terms of it but Hezekiah in response to this word from Isaiah lays it all out before the Lord and you see his faith growing, you see the humble way that he applies for the help of God before the throne of God. Verse 14. Actually, let's just look at the letter real quickly or just a portion of it in verse 10.

10 "Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you [oh, the blasphemy of it all], saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." 11 Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? 12 Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them,

And he repeats what Rabshekah had said earlier, verse 13,

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

Humanly speaking, it looked to be an unanswerable argument and Hezekiah turns to the Lord in verse 14, the precious nature of this humble faith in a time of maximum weakness,

14 Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD [just him and the Lord]. 15 Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying,

He exercises his faith in prayer. Did you hear me? He exercised his faith in prayer saying, verse 16,

16 O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the 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 listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. 18 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, 19 and have cast their gods into the fire,

He's saying everything they are saying about their past conquest is true. This is exactly what they have done. But he sees through, he sees the distinction in verse 19,

they [referring to those prior conquests] were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them.

So he's exalted God, he has affirmed his confidence in the character and the power of God, and now he makes his request. It's a simple one in verse 20,

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

This is a great triumph of faith, is it not? This is a stunning prayer of confidence and trust in a time of great weakness. There is this tension in the narrative. Hezekiah is powerless on his own to face the threat but he calls out to the all-powerful God for deliverance and how can this work out? How will this be resolved? Verse 21,

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent word to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

Isaiah says, "Hezekiah, the Lord has heard your prayer and I'm going to tell you in advance exactly what's going to happen as a result. Here is how God is going to answer you." He gives a word against Assyria beginning in verse 22 and for the sake of time, we'll jump down to verse 33 and see what the Lord says to Hezekiah. Isaiah 37:33,

33 "Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, 'He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield, or throw up a siege ramp against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he will not come to this city,' declares the LORD. 35 'For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'"

Somehow when the Lord speaks from the holiness of his throne, that thrice great holiness of the temple in which he dwells, suddenly all arguments are over. Suddenly you realize that God is about to make himself known and when he does, he is to be feared.

Then in the simplicity of the narrative which is so characteristic of Scripture, it describes the miraculous intervention of God in such plainspoken brief statements and it does it here in verse 36,

36 Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead.

A miraculous destruction of the greatest army on earth took place and God had displayed his power. He had miraculously delivered his people from the Assyrian army. The threat was over in a night. That's what God can do by his power and if he chooses not to do it in the midst of our particular distress, it's not because he's not able to do it, it's because he has other purposes that are advanced by delaying the deliverance that we want.

Here in Isaiah, God wasn't finished with Assyria yet. Sennacherib goes home, this king who had blasphemed God, and I love the way this ends. I love the way this ends. Verse 37,

37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh.

He goes back with his tail between his legs, unable to execute the threat of destruction that he had made against Jerusalem, that he had made against Hezekiah, that ultimately he had made against the Lord God of heaven, and in verse 38, look at the end of Sennacherib.

38 It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.

Do you know what you call that, beloved? You call that poetic justice. Sennacherib had mocked the power of the living God to deliver his people, God destroys his army, and then Sennacherib in the temple of his own god loses his own life at the hands of his own sons. Whose God is mighty to save? Whose God truly has the power to deliver? History has just put it on display without an argument to be made against it. History proved God's power. He broke the army of Assyria and Sennacherib who had blasphemed him died in the so-called presence of his own false god. That is vindication of the name of God. That is vindication of the power of God. That displays the mighty power of God to save his people.

Now, Isaiah's book of prophecy goes on and later on in Isaiah in chapter 53, we see what we now understand more clearly in the New Testament age. It's not just that God has the power to raise up nations and cast them down, it's not just that God can destroy a human army at his simple decision to do so and that the greatest armies of the earth are

powerless when God decides to act against them, it's not just that, that God has the power to break armies, to break nations, to break kings, there is something even better, there is something even greater, there is an even greater power in the spiritual realm: this God of whom Isaiah speaks has the power to break the power of sin. Isaiah 53:4,

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried;

He's looking forward to the time of Christ, looking beyond, in one sense, the time of Christ to that still future date to us when Israel is saved and they look back and they recognize what Christ had done. Verse 4, Isaiah 53,

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Isaiah here is showing us, declaring to us 700 years before the crucifixion of Christ, that God not only has the power to deliver a nation from armies, he has the power to deliver individual men from sin and he manifested that power in a seeming time of weakness when the Incarnate God, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, was hanging on the cross, when he was smitten by God for the sins of his people. Seven centuries after Isaiah, seven centuries plus after the deliverance at the hands of the Assyrian army, 700 years later, Jesus Christ accomplished an even greater deliverance than that. He accomplished a spiritual deliverance, a spiritual salvation, a spiritual victory and he saved his people from sin at the cross of Calvary.

Beloved, don't you see? Do you see it? God is mighty to save. God can break an army. God can break the power of sin in the human heart in Christ. God saves from a military siege, God saves from your spiritual siege of sin, of Satan, of spiritual blindness. Do you see the message? Do you see what overarching theme this declares about who God is? He's mighty to save in the physical realm, in the spiritual realm, in visible ways and invisible ways. He is able to save in time. He is able to save in eternity. That's how great, how powerful, how mighty God is to save and, beloved, it is no overstatement on my part to tell you that for God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to save you from your sin, to break the power of sin in your heart, was no less an act of miraculous power than it was to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night. The power that that army had over Israel was a shadow of the power of sin in your own heart and you needed a supernatural deliverance from it, and if you are not in Christ, you need a supernatural deliverance today.

He's mighty to save but do you know what else we see in this? Do you know what else we see in this? This is so sweet. It's not just that he's mighty to save, he is willing to save. He is gracious to those who call out to him in repentant faith. He was gracious to

Hezekiah and graciously saved him and the nation that he represented when Hezekiah called out to him. Those of you who are in Christ, don't you have the exact same testimony? Don't you call out? Didn't you at one time call out to him at some point, in some way, and say, "God, save me from my sin!" And what did he do? He responded in love. He responded in power and he did just that and caused you to be born again; forgave all of your sins; imparted a new nature to you; and now is powerfully at work in your heart with a work that he plans to bring to completion at the day of Christ Jesus. Mighty to save. Willing to save. This God is a Warrior for his people, a victorious Warrior of might to save his people. A victorious Warrior of love, of grace, of mercy to those who call out to him when they have no righteousness of their own to merit his response.

My unsaved friend watching on the live stream in your home, hearing this on subsequent media, here in the room with me this evening, this God of whom we have spoken extends to you an offer in Christ in loyal love, in exceeding compassion, in wonderful grace, calls you and says, "I will save you. Come to me for salvation." Christ said, "The one who comes to me, I'll certainly not cast out." There is no reason for anyone to walk out of this room unsaved. There is no reason for anyone to walk out of this room separate from Christ because he is willing to save, he is mighty to save, he calls you to come to him by faith alone.

If you're here and you are in Christ, he graciously calls you to remember his power, to remember his willingness to save, to remember how he has saved you in the past and he calls you to faith in him, to trust him as he works out his purpose in every difficult detail of your life, every difficult relationship, every change that is just on the horizon as he works out his purpose, his good purpose in every detail of your life. Beloved, no wonder as we'll see next week, Psalm 76 says God is known and God is to be feared. And for those of us that are in Christ, we say, "Amen and amen," and we add, "Yes, and he is a God to be loved."

*Father, bless us as we go. Thank you for your power to save. Thank you for your willingness to save. Thank you for your love which keeps your people safe until the end. For those facing change, for those facing challenge with us here this evening, Father, may they draw great comfort from who you are. May fear give way to faith. May tears give way to trust. May doubt give way to confidence in the light of the greatness of who you are. Father, we pray these things in the name of our wonderful Lord Jesus, that one who saves from sin, for those who come to him by faith. In the name of that one we pray. Amen.*

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