

ISAIAH 36

A LOUD-MOUTHED BRAGGER

In this and the three following chapters, Isaiah becomes not only a prophet, but also a historian; for the Scripture's history – as well as its prophecy – was given by Divine inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men in order to be preserved in a written record. Although Isaiah's prophecies in the foregoing chapters find their ultimate spiritual fulfillment in Christ's Gospel-Kingdom, many of them also had an immediate physical accomplishment in Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem, and the miraculous defeat that he met with. Therefore, the narrative of this historical event is inserted here at this point in the Book, in order to explain and confirm the prophecies. The key of prophecy is to be found in history; and in order to give the reader entrance into the prophecies, the history-key is hung next to the door (so to speak). The exact fulfillment of this prophecy concerning Sennacherib serves to confirm the faith of God's people in all the other prophecies.

Having taken most of the strongholds of Judah, Sennacherib sent Rabshakeh with a great army to besiege Jerusalem and demand its surrender (verses 1-2). King Hezekiah did send an embassy to meet with Rabshakeh; but he addressed them in a proud, insolent, and taunting manner. He reproached them for putting their trust in Egypt, he mocked their feebleness, and he assured them that Sennacherib had come up against the city at the command of Jehovah Himself (verses 4-10). Hezekiah's men requested this arrogant Assyrian to speak with them in the Syrian language, so that the common people who were on the wall might not understand his words (verse 11). But to this, he replied that he had come for the express purpose of causing the people to hear. He then raised his voice and endeavored to draw the people away from listening to King Hezekiah and trusting in the Lord. He attempted to induce them to submit to Sennacherib – promising them abundance in the land to which he would take them, and urging the power of the Assyrian king as a reason why they should yield to him (verses 12-20). But to all of these words, the embassy of Hezekiah said nothing; rather, they returned into the city with deep expressions of sorrow and grief, and reported Rabshakeh's words to their king (verses 21-22).

Let us observe some of the practical lessons that this chapter teaches us. First, sometimes people may be in the way of their duty, and still meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was leading his nation back to the Lord, and his people had reformed themselves somewhat; and yet their country was still invaded, and a great part of it was laid waste. Perhaps they had begun to grow re-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Sennacherib sends Rabshakeh to Jerusalem – verses 1-2
- ❖ Rabshakeh's blasphemous words to Hezekiah's representatives – verses 3-10
- ❖ His appeal to the people of Jerusalem to desert Hezekiah – verses 11-20
- ❖ Report of Rabshakeh's words is brought back to Hezekiah – verses 21-22

miss and cool in their work of reformation; and so God visited them with this judgment, in order to put new life into them and encourage them to renewed efforts in that good cause. We must not wonder if the Lord sometimes sends us afflictions in order to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forward in our Christian life.

Proud persons love to talk big, and to boast of what they are and what they have done – and even of what they think they will do. They insult over others and defy all mankind – even though by doing so, they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men, and obnoxious to the wrath of God, Who resists the proud. But although evil people and their wickedness may prosper for a while, they cannot prosper always.

The enemies of God's people endeavor to conquer them by frightening them – especially by frightening them away from their confidence in Jehovah. Thus did Rabshakeh here. With a loud mouth and mocking words, he portrayed Hezekiah as being utterly unable to resist his master, Sennacherib. Therefore, we learn here that the only way for us to maintain our ground against our souls' enemies is to keep up our hope in our God.

When Satan wishes to tempt people from trusting in God and clinging to Him, he does so by insinuating that they may better their condition if they yield to him instead. But it is a false suggestion and grossly absurd, and so it is to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. The world and the flesh say to us, "Make an agreement with us and come out to us; submit to our dominion, and you shall eat every one of his own vine." But they are deceiving us by promising us liberty, when they are actually leading us into the lowest captivity and slavery.

Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare Him with the idols of the heathen (as Rabshakeh did). How blasphemous to say that He can do no more for the protection of His worshipers than those false gods can for the protection of theirs! They are nothing, but He is the great I AM; they are the creations of men's imagination and the works of men's hands, but He is the Creator of all things.

It is sometimes prudent to not answer a fool according to his folly. Hezekiah's command was, "Answer him not." It would have only provoked the foolish bragger to rail and blaspheme even more; and so it was wiser to leave it to God to stop his mouth, for no man could have done so. However, it is fitting for

the people of God to be sorrowful over the dishonor done to Him by the blasphemies of wicked men. Thus Hezekiah's men tore their clothes in a holy zeal for the glory of the Lord's name, showing that they took no pleasure in their own attire and ornaments when His honor was being attacked by a loud-mouthed bragger.

Lord, we know that Your people will sometimes experience trouble in this world; but we thank You that we shall overcome the world in Your strength, and we rejoice in this confidence! Amen.

