

**Isaiah 36:12-22 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> But *the* Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?"**

**<sup>13</sup> Then *the* Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!**

**<sup>14</sup> Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you;**

**<sup>15</sup> nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." ' "**

**<sup>16</sup> Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make *peace* with me *by a* present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern;**

**<sup>17</sup> until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.**

**<sup>18</sup> *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria?**

**<sup>19</sup> Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand?**

**<sup>20</sup> Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?' "**

**<sup>21</sup> But they held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him."**

**<sup>22</sup> Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with *their* clothes torn, and told him the words of *the* Rabshakeh.**

Do you know what one of the problem with lies is? You can't always tell they are lies. And our flesh's natural response is often to treat them like they are true. We look around. We weigh the evidence. We even think we are being smart. We draw a conclusion. And then we act accordingly. And we do all of that without ever consulting what God has spoken. Or we know what God has said, but we do not let it overpower what our flesh has spoken, or what the enemy has spoken. Sometimes the lie is a threat, like in our text this morning. So we fear and worry and come up with earthly strategies to deal with our fears.

Sometimes the lies are offerings of something better. And we allow our flesh to crave that thing and to become fixated on it until we must have it.

The lies come packaged in all kinds of believable packages. But **if the message** does not come from God, we cannot know if **they are true or not**. But we can always know that they are true if they come from God.

This morning we have a wonderful example of a carefully and powerfully packaged lie. All the props are set to make it look like a fact. All the statistics line up on the side of the lie. Everything the eye can see says it is true. Any thinking person who did not **hear from God** or **know God** would be convinced. All the people with good creeds but no faith would be swayed by this situation.

And everyone is **listening to the lie** and **choosing**. Just like we do every day.

Look at verse 13

**"Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!**

<sup>14</sup> **Thus says the king:**

Then look at Chapter 37 verse 6.

**Isaiah 37:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> **'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.**

What does the King of Assyria say?

The major gist of the message is- only the King of Assyria can deliver you from harm. Only the King of Assyria can deliver you to safety. You must trust what **you can see**. You must decide on **what you think and feel** based on **what you can see and touch**. You can't help it, he says. You are powerless to do otherwise. It is not faithless to succumb to the pressure. You must do it. You cannot be blamed.

What else **can** you do?

And what does the Lord of the heavens and earth say? Do not be afraid of the threat you see. Only **I** have the real power to deliver you from harm. Only **I** can bring satisfaction to your soul. There is no other source of the offerings **I** provide. All other sources are lies from the devil. They will only make you miserable in the long run. And in eternity, they will lead to destruction.

This is life on planet earth. We don't always have it presented so clearly and with such a stark contrast. But this is the decision that is always before us. We live **by faith** or we live **by sight**. We believe **the truth**, or we believe **a lie**. We trust in **God**, or we trust in **something else**. We have **peace** in our lives, or we have turmoil.

We are given a glorious perspective in this story. We know the ending. We know that Jerusalem was going to be powerfully delivered by the hand of God. We

know that every person listening to the message of the enemy that day could have gone home, ate their lunch, thanked God, and not spent another minute considering the words of the treacherous liar outside the city. They didn't have to lose a minute's sleep from this non-threat. That was the truth that could not be seen. It was the truth that was not self evident. It was the truth that only came by hearing from God. But it was a truth clearly spoken by the word of God.

Are you worried about something this morning? Are you afraid of what might happen to you? Are you afraid that the power of God in your life is not great enough to get you through the potential calamity you might experience?

Just realize this. **Your life does not have to be like that. Your life does not have to be like that.** You are choosing it for whatever reasons. But **faith** sees **the end** where **God provides what you need because of what God has said. Flesh sees everything else. But faith takes God at His word.** If we cannot take God at His word, we don't have faith. We may have a religion. But we do not have faith. Have you ever considered that if you are a child of God, every problem you have is God's problem? I saw a quote from a military bomb diffuser. He was talking about his attitude toward his work. He said it wasn't stressful to him. He said, "Either I am right, or suddenly it's not my problem any more." There are other ways of looking at our problems. Do you have a money problem? It is God's problem. Do you have a health problem? It is God's problem. If God is **really on the throne** and He **truly does love us**, we can really **trust Him** with the problems we face. We can really believe that He has them all well in hand. They are all serving the exact purpose that God has in mind. We can really obey God and do exactly what He says and think exactly what He says. The wonderful thing about authority is that any problem of an underling is ultimately the problem of the authority. We can rest in that.

There are some issues where I have lost sight of that. I have become perplexed and thought that I must solve this thing. I allowed the outcome to be completely reliant upon my efforts. And I could not be satisfied until I resolved it. But I forgot about the authority of God. I have come to realize that **it is not ultimately my problem to solve. It is God's.** If He wants it resolved, so be it. If He does not, so be it. I am not in charge. I don't need to be in charge. And there is a very real sense in which **I don't want to be in charge.** It is too likely that I would mess things up. I like having a place other than me where the buck stops. Sometimes I wish I could hurry things along. But that is above my pay grade. God has it all handled. I just need to trust and obey.

So this morning we have two sources promising deliverance to a besieged city in our text. And this morning we have two voices calling out to us telling us how **we too** can be delivered. So the text really applies to our lives this morning.

Now let's go back to verse 12

**12 But *the Rabshakeh* said, "Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?"**

Look at how authoritatively this field commander is speaking. He speaks like he knows the future. Stephen Hawking wasn't as authoritative but he said "I don't think we will survive another 1,000 years without escaping beyond our fragile planet."

The devil always wants us to focus on the doom and gloom that **man can produce** or that **time and chance can produce** or that **the devil can produce**. God always wants us to start with our focus on the doom and gloom that God promises to produce.

**Matthew 10:27-31 (NKJV)**

**27 "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.**

**28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

**29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.**

**30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**

**31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.**

Look at the wisdom of what Jesus says. He is not saying that it is stupid to fear. But He is telling us how to make sense about **what** and **whom** we fear. Fear God. Start there. And once you have implemented that fear and taken it to its logical conclusion, you then will have nothing left to fear.

If we go where the fear of God takes us, we will make sure to get right with God. And when we get right with God, we have nothing left to fear.

In our text Assyrian's field commander is prophesying gloom and doom as if it is an unavoidable event unless they surrender to their enemy. He is speaking authoritatively from experience. But he was not to be feared. He was not to be believed. Because He was speaking against the one true God. He was speaking a message contrary to the one God was speaking.

**13 Then *the Rabshakeh* stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!**

**14 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you;**

Here it is. Here is the message of the enemy. Don't trust the people who speak for God because they cannot give you the thing you want most in life. Now **technically** the Rabshakeh **was correct**. Hezekiah as a political leader like Sennacherib, **could not** deliver the people. But Hezekiah was not like Sennacherib. He would not have been so arrogant as to promise that **he** could do so. But **essentially** Rabshakeh was **incorrect**. Following Hezekiah's advice and guidance **would** deliver the people from the king of Assyria.

Do you have godly people in your life who give you godly guidance and godly advice? Don't allow your circumstances to convince you that you need to stop listening to them to get what you really need in your life. If those people are speaking for Jesus, follow them and trust Jesus. Don't harden yourself against them because you have committed to another way to live.

I think it is interesting how loud and how clear the message of the enemy is made. And God did nothing to stop it. Just as He will not stop the taunts of the enemies toward us. They serve a purpose. They provide an opportunity to stand for Christ. Where is the enemy tempting you to despair? This is your chance to trust Christ and prove by your confidence in Christ that you are not afraid of the enemy's taunts. Everyone will know by your response what you really believe, even if you fool yourself.

**15 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." '**

**16 Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make *peace* with me *by a* present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern;**

**17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.**

Look at the contrast here. There are two sources offered for deliverance.

Here is one message- The Lord will surely deliver us from the king of Assyria

Here is the other- Only the king of Assyria can deliver you.

This is a perfect test. There is no subtlety here. This is an open declaration with a challenge to choose sides. There are many of these in scriptures. Some were very dramatic. How about when Elijah challenged all the priests of Baal? Or how about in Joshua 24 when Joshua was preparing the people of Israel to enter the promised land.

**Joshua 24:14-17 (NKJV)**

**<sup>14</sup> "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!**

**<sup>15</sup> And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."**

**<sup>16</sup> So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;**

**<sup>17</sup> for the LORD our God *is* He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed.**

It is God's will that we have alternative paths. God wants us at times to be offered what only God can give us **by another source**. We may want those alternatives to be silenced. It would make it easier for us. But God's plan requires the taunts of the enemy. Those taunts serve as a **proving ground** for those **who truly worship Him** and as an **alternative** for those who **do not**. Those who have no alternative options cannot glorify God by willingly and enthusiastically choosing God. And that is what God wants.

The enemies of God desperately wish to harm the kingdom of God. They want to bring it crashing down. They want all that is left to be the kingdom of man. But they never **harm** the kingdom of God, at all, ever. Their efforts are less than futile. They are useful to God. All the enemies of God can ultimately accomplish is to provide a proving ground for the children of God.. And by trying the true, they strengthen it. Even when His people fail, even when they give in to the taunts and temptations of the enemy, they gain a deeper understanding of their flesh. They learn not to trust themselves. They learn that the devil lies, he steals, he destroys. He takes things of value in exchange for trinkets. He promises pleasure and leaves only regrets. He cannot be trusted. He must be resisted. Yes, everything the enemy does accomplishes something important in the Kingdom of God. That is the kind of Sovereign reign our God has on His creation. Now look again what the Rabshakeh was offering to these people.

**'Make *peace* with me *by a present* and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern;**

**17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.**

Doesn't this look like what God promised His people. He offered them a land of milk and honey where they would do all these same things.

Have you ever considered that the devil never created a single thing? He never made anything to meet the needs of the creation. He never created anything to give them pleasure. Nothing. All he ever does is repackage stuff. I was thinking about how to best make this point and I think that sex is probably the clearest example.

God offers marriage. He offers a very specific way for a man and a woman to enjoy what He has created. He makes it a precious commodity whereby the people who enjoy it and those human children created by it are protected and safe. He keeps it in boundaries of His deciding, but He gives us this wonderful gift to be fully enjoyed by His creation and it results in giving thanks to the Creator. But there are restrictions. In fact, God gives very severe restrictions. He tells us that he absolutely forbids His people to enjoy this gift outside of His restrictions. And most every NT epistle gives some mention to this.

What does the devil offer? He takes the same resources and repackages them. He removes all restraints. He has no restriction. By removing all the protective restrictions, he presents himself as a benevolent master. But what he accomplishes is he turns something God created to be precious and special and important and valuable into something cheap, something easy, something destructive, something full of regret, something of no value and no restraint. He uses it to destroy both the **value of the gift** and the **safety of those who participate in it.**

That is always what the enemy of our souls does. He can only repackage and remarket God's stuff. He doesn't have any of his own. And we can know that it is never for our good. It will not do us any good, except as an opportunity to repent. That never changes and it **never will** change.

The Rabshakeh was only offering God's people what God's people had already been promised by God. But there are two big differences.

**First**, the King of Assyria would not have delivered upon his promise. His goal was never to enrich the lives of the people. His goal was to conquer the land.

And **second**, by accepting the terms of the King of Assyria, they would be owned by the king of Assyria. They would never again be free to serve their God as they had in the past. Of course that isn't mentioned in the deal. Full disclosure has never been one of the Devil's strengths. He is very good at telling us what we

want to hear. But he rarely says more than that. The devil's deals always have a hook in them intended to punish those who choose to trust him.

So the offer was made. The devil's repackaging of the promised land was being offered. And the alternative described was pure and certain punishment.

<sup>18</sup> ***Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria?**

<sup>19</sup> ***Where are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? *Where are* the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand?**

<sup>20</sup> ***Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?' "***

<sup>21</sup> ***But they held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him."***

The greatest weakness in any argument is a wrong assumption. It doesn't matter how logical an argument is, if one of its assumptions is wrong, the argument will be faulty.

The argument's assumption is that Jerusalem's God was a god like all the rest. Now if that assumption had been true, the argument would have been true. It makes sense that lands A, B and C had gods. Their gods did not protect them from Assyria. Therefore it is likely that the God of D will not protect **them** either. But the God of Jerusalem was not an idol. He is the true and living God, the God who made heaven and earth.

Now this is all well and good as we read this several thousands of years later. But put yourself on the wall listening to this message from the Devil. How are you going to respond? What are you going to do?

This force is threatening everything you hold dear.

It seems to have great power to carry out the threat.

It is attacking your God with impunity and God does not strike him dead.

Everything you see screams your destruction.

What would YOU do? What would YOU believe?

If we think the threats **we face** are big, most pale in comparison to **this threat**.

This looked like certain destruction.

How would we have done? Well, how do we do now? How do we do now when things we value seem threatened? What do we do now when we can't see how we will take care of ourselves? What do we do when we think an outside force might take away something we love? What do we do when all the evidence



seems to say the enemy will win? What do we do when the Devil is offering us the things our heart craves in competition to the offerings of God? What do we do now? That is what we would probably have done then.

When faith is placed in God in a setting like this, it creates a huge expectation that God is going to do something amazing. It expects **God to do** what only God **can** do. I think maybe we have lost such an expectation. What do we really expect God to do in our world? What do we expect Him to do in our lives? Do we expect to languish in the same state of defeat tomorrow that we experience today? Do we expect that He will do nothing to draw people to Himself? Do we expect that He will not draw **us to people** and draw **people to us** who need to hear about Him? Our text this morning is not showing us something new about God. God has always been the kind of God who delivers on His promises. What is different is that these people are being put to the test. The choices are clear and immediate and force. They need to decide right now who they will trust.

I am convinced that God wants to do **more in my life**. He wants to do more in our church. He wants to do more in our community. And He wants a people who **expect** that God is going to deliver on His promises. He wants people on the wall who say, I know that God is going to do what He says He will do. I know that the enemy cannot withstand the attack of God, the work of God, the power of God. I am not afraid of the threats of the enemy. I am not seduced by the offerings of the enemy. And because of that I am going to align my life, my minutes, my work with that which God says He will do.

We don't see that happen a whole lot of times in the history of God's people. But when we do see it, when God's people **expect** that God will **move** to do what He has **promised** to do, we often see God do some very amazing, very impossible things. Those who put their hope in God will never be disappointed.