

THE RABSHAKEH'S TEMPTATION

INTRODUCTION

We are at a transition point between the two big sections of Isaiah. Chapter 40 begins what has been referred to as “2nd Isaiah” because the tone and themes change dramatically with chapter 40.

This transition also marks the changing of the rulers of Judah from King Ahaz to his son Hezekiah. Ahaz was a double-minded, weak, and mostly faithless king that led Israel into a lot of trouble. Hezekiah is a good king, full of faith in God.

READ 2 Kings 18:4 (*Hezekiah a good king – destroying the outlying places of worship that had become corrupted and an offense to God*)

The other important detail here is that Babylon is beginning to rebel against Assyria and will eventually become the evil super power of the region, as Isaiah has already prophesied. But right now, they are just another conquered people by Assyria.

THE RABSHAKEH MAKES A SPEECH

A high level military leader (Rab-shaw-kay) is sent to the walls around Judah to appeal to them for surrender. Most of the rest of Israel, and the surrounding map has been taken and/or utterly destroyed with as much humiliation as the Assyrians could throw into the process as possible.

LYING WITH THE TRUTH

The Rabshakeh's speech – peppered with enough truth to make it appear credible. The Rabshakeh's speech is reminiscent of how The Devil lies to us, attempting to shake our trust in the LORD.

Satan lies to us with the truth.

1. lists our failures (you trusted Egypt, how stupid must you be?),
2. exaggerates His power (He does have power, but His power is limited by God),
3. presents “evidence” of God's unfaithfulness to us (bitterness and unbelief)

Satan lies to us with false promises.

1. To fix our circumstances and
2. To make us comfortable and safe.

Just like the Assyrian Rabshakeh, Satan is quite convincing in his arguments when he makes his case. No matter how strong in your faith that you are, we all have moments where the Enemy's speech is so convincing that our confidence is shaken and we begin to wonder if he's right.

RESPONDING WITH OBEDIENCE

READ Verse Isaiah 36:21

“The kings command was ‘Do not answer him’.”

They responded with perfect obedience to their king, despite that his speech must have shaken them at least to some degree. Trust is expressed in obedience, not in confidence. A lack of confidence does not mean a lack of trust. Obedience, no matter how shaky, is evidence of real trust.

Trusting God doesn't have to mean that you always feel confident in the outcomes. It just means that you obey Him.

It also means that you don't have to know what to do. You don't have to know how to respond to challenges. Sometimes obeying God looks more like silence than speaking, stillness instead of activity.

HEZEKIAH'S RESPONSE

Messengers report back all of this to Hezekiah and he is understandably worried. This is very bad news – they are in Assyria's crosshairs.

When Sennacarb hears that there was literally no response to his threat, he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying...

READ Isaiah 37:10-13

Unlike his father, Ahaz, Hezekiah immediately brings the matter before the LORD.

READ Isaiah 37:14-20

GOD RESPONDS TO HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER

READ Isaiah 37:21-38

God delivered Hezekiah and Judah in response to his prayer and his faith (**verse 21**). Hezekiah did not have to lift a finger – not a shot was fired.

The work for Hezekiah was the work of prayer and obedience. Nothing more.

HEZEKIAH'S ILLNESS AND FOOLISHNESS WITH BABYLON

Next we have some foreshadowing of the Babylonian invasion that is to come.

After a personal health crisis with Hezekiah, Babylon approaches him for an alliance (the enemy of my enemy is my friend). Hezekiah foolishly shows them where all the storehouses and gold is hidden. Isaiah prophesies that the day will come when Babylon takes it all.

Manasseh will eventually take the kingdom from his father and send it into rebellion and ruin at the hands of Babylon under God's judgement.

CONCLUSION

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to how Satan has been lying to you just like The Rabshakeh did to the armies of Judah.

Pray and resist Him, and then ask Jesus to speak to you in your heart and replace the lies of the Enemy with the truth of God.

Perhaps replace those lies with something from Hezekiah himself:

Hezekiah's prayer of remembrance after his deliverance. (**Isaiah 38:9-20**).