

Spin Doctors
Isaiah versus Sennacherib, God versus Satan, Truth versus Spin
Isaiah 36 – 37:8

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At one time in my life, I was responsible for the management of, care and feeding of, plus all the content related to the underwriting of an insurance product sold and used nationwide. As part of my job, I learned how to spin. I refused to engage in it.

Spin is a contemporary term for a form of propaganda that relies on deceptive methods of persuasion. In politics, business, and elsewhere, spin is often characterized by exaggeration, euphemisms, inaccuracies, half-truths, and excessively emotional appeals. A person who composes and/or communicates spin is referred to as a spin doctor. Or marketing.

We are going to find out that spin is really nothing new. As long as there has been governmental leaders, businessmen, religious leaders; or just you and me, there is a desire to be portrayed to others in a positive light. Spin finds its origins in Genesis 3. By the way, spin = telling or framing the story to put you or your firm in the best light. Many times, it is simply failing to tell the whole story.

An omission of pertinent facts. The first spin doctor's work can be seen in Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:1–13

“Now the serpent was more shrewd than any of the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Is it really true that God said, ‘You must not eat from any tree of the orchard?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, ‘You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “**Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil.**” When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the orchard at the breezy time of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the orchard. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” The man replied, “I heard you moving about in the orchard, and I was

afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” **And the LORD God said, “Who told you that you were naked? And the LORD God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? The man said, “The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.” So the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman replied, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.””** (NET)

I would say as little as possible, or I would reply with a comment that avoided answering the question implied by the questioner putting them on a rabbit trail. Only when I was asked a direct question, then and only then would I answer the question. Most of the time, the direct question never came.

We covered a small portion of the meeting between Hezekiah’s officials and the Rabshakeh (chief wine-pourer.) This is the part where he poo poos the help coming from Egypt. That was not spin but had been exactly what the Lord had been telling Judah through Isaiah multiple times. The spin is coming.

Isaiah 36:1–6

“Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 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. Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him. 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? “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? “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.” (NASB95)

So much for military secrets. All the officials captured from all the cities of Judah, that now belong to Assyria, spilled the beans. I would not be surprised if Assyria even knew how many supplies there were in Jerusalem and how long the city could hold out in a siege.

These are real people in a real predicament. Some of their personal seals have been found.

Isaiah

Belonging to Isaiah

<https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2018/02/28/has-the-personal-seal-of-the-prophet-isaiah-been-discovered/>

Shebna

Belonging to Shebnayahu Servant of the King

<https://www.bible.ca/bulla/bible-archeology-jeremiah-clay-bullae-seal-inscription-property-of-belonging-to-Shebna-Shebnayahu-servant-of-the-king-Isaiah-22-15-19-2Kings18-13-18-Lachish-701bc.htm>

Hezekiah

Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/news/king-hezekiah-in-the-bible-royal-seal-of-hezekiah-comes-to-light/>

Because Assyria had indeed conquered all of Judah, apart from Jerusalem, there is some other valuable intelligence they know as well. Things which can be used against Hezekiah.

For a Jew in the 6th century BC, as well as for anyone else in the middle east at that time, there is something that they believe in. It is the idea of cosmic geography. Rabshakeh is going to use that idea, and, in the process, he will blaspheme YAHWEH.

We see this idea expressed by Moses in Deuteronomy that as a result of the rebellion at Babel, the earth was divided.

Deuteronomy 32:8–9

“When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.” (ESV)

The Old Testament therefore describes a world where cosmic-geographical lines have been drawn. Israel was holy ground because it was Yahweh’s “inheritance,” in the language of Deuteronomy 32:8–9. The territory of other nations belonged to other elohim because Yahweh had decreed it. (Heiser 2015, 116)

Those other elohim, former members of the Divine Council, corrupted themselves and began to demand worship rather than administratively oversee what YAHWEH had assigned to them. We already looked at their ultimate punishment when we examined Isaiah 34.

The Rabshakeh though, connected the idols which King Hezekiah had systematically removed from Judah, to the worship of YAHWEH. He did not understand that the removal of these idols was in obedience to YAHWEH, not a removal of places of worship of YAHWEH. He also knows that the move did not have popular support from the people.

Isaiah 36:7

““But 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’?” (NASB95)

The Assyrian officials turned simple obedience to YAHWEH and His word into a political move on the part of Hezekiah, they are spinning the truth into a lie by implying he did this to centralize and consolidate his personal power.

Hezekiah ended the people from approaching God on their own terms back to on His terms. At the Temple and only the Temple.

This command runs completely contrary to the way most people come to God in our culture. For the most part, Americans have an entirely individualistic way of coming to God, where each person makes up their own rules about dealing with God as they see Him. (Guzik 2000, Is 36:7)

Part of the problem is that too many in the Christian community have bought into unbiblical notions about what it means to live a “good life,” so it doesn’t look, to outsiders, like we’re doing anything special. Rather than living as a countercultural community that bears witness to the coming kingdom of God, many of us go with the cultural flow, thoughtlessly consuming the products, ideas, and aspirations streamed for us in an unending deluge of retweets and Facebook likes. It’s so hard, in this screen age, to keep our attention focused on anything for very long—much less a way of life introduced to Middle Eastern peasants two thousand years ago. (Kinnaman and Lyons 2016, 33)

In other words, we have allowed ourselves to become more like Judah but living in the 21st century. Jesus called the spirit of this age Laodicean in Revelation 3. Instead of Jesus being in the church, He is standing at the door and knocking to get in.

We don’t see it yet, but things in this nation are about to get very real. Are you ready for Pastors to go to jail because they teach the word? There is a bill in the hopper right now that will make that happen. Are you ready for the free exercise of your 1st Amendment rights to worship be infringed? They already have been in many states thanks to COVID. Assyria is already running throughout the land.

Revelation 3:16–21

“So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (NASB95)

To get along with the world, with Assyria, Judah was being forced to conform religiously because of becoming a vassal under Ahaz. In Rome, all you had to do was go into the Temple of Caesar, pinch off a little incense and say, “Caesar is Lord.” Hundreds of thousands died rather than do so.

What are the compromises being forced today?

How about forcing all churches to close nationwide so we can make sure no one catches COVID.

In Florida this was not an issue except for a few weeks. Elsewhere though, this is a continuing problem.

What's next? “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12, NASB95)

Hezekiah's religious reforms would be a matter of no small import to the Assyrians. The gathering of all the priestly power into the royal city could only strengthen the hand of the rebellious Hezekiah. Furthermore, the exaltation of Yahweh would also involve a repudiation of the Assyrian pantheon who had witnessed the covenant between Judah and Assyria. Nonetheless, the destruction of the worship centers outside Jerusalem must have seemed like a colossal blunder to the idolatrous and polytheistic Assyrians. For them, the more places at which some form of the god was worshiped, the more manipulative power the ritual had. To limit the worship to one place could only lessen its power and infuriate the god. (Oswalt 1986, 636)

We see this idea of spiritual powers and cosmic geography reflected in Daniel 10 when Gabriel appears before Daniel.

Daniel 10:20–21

“Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.” (ESV)

The notion that different nations were allotted to different gods or heavenly beings was widespread in the ancient world. (Collins 1999, 663)

By the way, not all of Judah was in agreement with Hezekiah when he had the altars torn down. The heart of the people has already strayed away from YAHWEH as reflected in the prophecies of Isaiah we have already looked at. Hosea, who was ministering at the same time as Isaiah, called it. He couched it in words familiar to a Jew, who was supposed to be the wife of YAHWEH.

Hosea 2:5–10

“Their mother is a shameless prostitute and became pregnant in a shameful way. She said, ‘I'll run after other lovers and sell myself to them for food and water, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil and drinks.’ For this reason I will fence her in with thornbushes. I will block her path with a wall to make her

lose her way. When she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch them. She will search for them but not find them. Then she will think, 'I might as well return to my husband, for I was better off with him than I am now.' She doesn't realize it was I who gave her everything she has—the grain, the new wine, the olive oil; I even gave her silver and gold. But she gave all my gifts to Baal. "But now I will take back the ripened grain and new wine I generously provided each harvest season. I will take away the wool and linen clothing I gave her to cover her nakedness. I will strip her naked in public, while all her lovers look on. No one will be able to rescue her from my hands." (NLT)

Thus, the Assyrian officer's confident assertion that God did not want to bless Judah probably touched the raw nerve of doubt which was already very near the surface of many a Judean consciousness (Jer. 44:18). (Oswalt 1986, 636)

Rabshakeh has begun his spin.

- Egypt is unreliable – truth
- Hezekiah destroyed the places to worship YAHWEH – false
- The people are confused as to who to worship – true
- Hezekiah is consolidating his power by tearing down the altars – false
- God does not want to bless Judah because Hezekiah tore down His altars – false
- I have a better deal for you – false
- I am looking out for your best interests – false
- I understand how to worship your God – false

1 Peter 5:8

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (NASB95)

Those who are working on behalf of Satan, like to twist the truth to encourage compromise. Just like Rabshakeh was. If he cannot us ineffective, then he wants us dead. He is a serial killer after all.

John 8:44 "You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and has never stood for truth, since there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies." (ISV)

Polycarp

Therefore, when he was brought before him, the proconsul asked if he were Polycarp. And when he confessed that he was, the proconsul tried to persuade him to recant, saying, "Have respect for your age," and other such things as they are accustomed to say: "Swear by the Genius of Caesar; repent; say, 'Away with the atheists!'" So Polycarp solemnly looked at the whole crowd of lawless heathen who were in the stadium, motioned toward them with his hand, and then (groaning as he looked up to heaven) said, "Away with the atheists!" But when the magistrate persisted and said, "Swear the oath, and I will release you; revile Christ," Polycarp replied, "For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" (The Church at Smyrna 1999, 233-235)

Here comes the pitch from Assyria.

Isaiah 36:8–10

"Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 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.' " " " (NASB95)

The spin continues with another statement of truth. The army of Judah is indeed impotent and unable to adequately defend Jerusalem or even the nation at large at this point.

Then he rubs it in a bit with another statement of truth, one of the strengths of the Assyrian army was their cavalry. They did indeed have extra horses available to them. A noticeable difference though is the army of Judah, which did not have a cavalry at all, or at least were not supposed to have one. In Deuteronomy 7:16, there is an explicit command given by YAHWEH that the King of Israel was not supposed to build up a large number of horses, in other words, the reliance of the people was to be on the Lord and not on their military might. The Kings failed at that as well as the second item as well, acquiring wives.

Deuteronomy 17:16–17

“The king must not build up a large stable of horses for himself or send his people to Egypt to buy horses, for the LORD has told you, ‘You must never return to Egypt.’ The king must not take many wives for himself, because they will turn his heart away from the LORD. And he must not accumulate large amounts of wealth in silver and gold for himself.” (NLT)

Solomon failed at all three. Most of the Kings failed in at least one or two of these.

Then there is the jab again about Egypt. This is followed by some more truth, at this point, Jerusalem could not defend itself even against a minor governor and the small number of troops they would have. But then comes a fatal error. Rabshakeh makes the assertion that he is the one doing what it is YAHWEH wants. He clearly states YAHWEH said to him to go up against the land and destroy it.

Could it be that he is aware of some the prophecies of Isaiah? Possible. He knew enough to be able to pervert what Isaiah had said. The intent was to cause those listening to begin to question God’s word.

This was spin. Yes, YAHWEH had said “Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.” (Isaiah 8:7, NASB95)

But He had also said “So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness.”” (Isaiah 10:12, NASB95)

Either Rabshakeh knew this and omitted it, or his intel was not as good as he thought. He blasphemes God instead.

The term blasphemy normally refers to verbal slander against God. However, acts of slander can also count as blasphemy. (Bock 2013, 84)

Leviticus 24:16 “Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.” (ESV)

Numbers 15:30–31

“But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.” (ESV)

The Rabshakeh has just crossed a line with his verbal spin. One which all observant Jews will understand has been crossed and one which they know the penalty for.

Isaiah 36:11–12

“Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, “Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” But Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not

to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?”
(NASB95)

It appears that the Rabshakeh knew Hebrew. That is another important thing to remember about spinning the truth, you need to be able to speak the language of those who you want to affect and speak directly to them. Like using Twitter or Facebook.

Our present-day politicians are well aware of this. Thus, the battle over the press and social media being waged these days. Their desire is to speak directly to the people in a manner they can understand with no intermediary. The leaders of Judah wanted him to speak in a language they understood but that they also knew the people at that time would not. If you are busy spinning the truth, that is simply not going to work.

At this point, I envision the Rabshakeh increasing the volume of his voice and speaking directly to the wall in Hebrew where he knows others are listening in. And he goes for the terror factor.

The thing I find amazing is this. Present day spin doctors who are desperate to get their message across at all costs, just like the Rabshakeh, they have no problem slandering God in the process. They will attribute things to the Lord, just like he did, that are blasphemous.

A recently elected US Senator from Georgia who also happens to be a Pastor, supports abortion on demand. He has gone as far to say that abortion is “consistent with” his philosophy as a Christian minister. (Dr. Berry 2020)

Isaiah 36:12

“But Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?”
(NASB95)

I am being reasonable and only wanted to talk to your King and to you. After all, you are part of the ruling elite and have food and drink and will not suffer in the coming siege, not like the folks on the wall. To make sure this is heard, he raises his voice even more.

Isaiah 36:13–20

“Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean and said, “Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus says the king, ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; 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.” ‘Do not listen to Hezekiah,’ for thus says the king of Assyria, ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, 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. ‘Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? ‘Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? ‘Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’ ”
(NASB95)

Wow what a deal, an offer of peace. He raises his voice and addresses the people of Jerusalem directly. He keeps on using twitter even though he has been shadow banned. The spin must go on.

Arrogantly going over the heads of the king’s officials (11), the Rabshakeh addresses the people directly, brutally reminding them that politicians make wars but people suffer them (12). But it is the same arrogant spirit which is now about to betray him into a fatal step. It is one thing—a fair diplomatic ploy—to advise against trusting either Hezekiah or the Lord (14–15); it is even humanitarian to offer peace and a new

home instead of the horrors of siege (16–17); but to equate the Lord with the gods of the nations (18–20) and to scorn his ability to save Jerusalem is quite different (cf. 37:4, 6, 15–19). (Motyer 1996, 278)

Continuing the Spin

- I am the only one who is truly compassionate and caring for the people of Jerusalem – false
- King Hezekiah cannot save you – true
- Don't let him bamboozle you into thinking that YAHWEH can save you either – false, blasphemy
- Defect to Assyria now and you will be saved – false
- Assyria will take you to a land of milk and honey – false
- Do not let Hezekiah mislead you that YAHWEH will save you – false, blasphemy
- YAHWEH is no better than any other god we have beaten – false, blasphemy
- YAHWEH cannot deliver Jerusalem from the hand of Assyria – false, blasphemy

Apparently, when taking public affairs 101, the Rabshakeh was not told about fact checking and how to avoid digging your own grave. He has crossed a line.

The existence of national deities is assumed in the Rabshakeh's taunt: "Who among all the gods of the countries have delivered their countries out of my hand that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" (2 Kgs 18:35 = Isa 36:20). (Collins 1999, 663)

Pray for those who are in positions of authority today. They need the Lord as many have crossed the same line in their support evil.

Habakkuk 1:2–5

"How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen! "Violence is everywhere!" I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, so that justice has become perverted. The LORD replied, "Look around at the nations; look and be amazed! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it." (NLT)

Luke 17:1–3

And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him," (ESV)

Returning to our text in Isaiah, after the spin, the lies and the blasphemy, the members of Hezekiah's administration who were sent out to have this discussion do not respond. Not at all.

Isaiah 36:21–22

"But they were silent and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, 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." (NASB95)

As far as these three men know, there is no hope at all. Jerusalem is doomed, they have just met with the messenger from the King of Assyria and the best part of the deal they heard was economic security in exchange for slavery. That, along with the spin, has placed them into a royal tailspin, and they have torn their clothes.

What does it mean when someone tears their clothes? “The act of tearing one’s clothing that are being worn. This is an act of great anguish and sorrow, and sometimes indicates a passionate plea or confession.” (Witthoff 2014)

They are taking what the Rabshakeh said, seriously. Time to see the King.

Isaiah 37:1–5

“And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. 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. 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. ‘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.’ ” So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.” (NASB95)

Finally, after all of the warnings, the prophecies from Isaiah, the warnings from Isaiah, the futile attempts to resolve everything on his own, Hezekiah now gets it. “Hezekiah rent his clothes in token of deepest humiliation and distress. Well he knew how largely he himself was responsible for the terrible blow that had fallen upon his kingdom. He had disregarded God’s warnings (cf. Isa 30; 31) and concluded the disastrous alliance with Egypt. Now he could only turn back in penitence to the prophet whose warnings he had ignored.” (Pfeiffer 1962, Is 37:1)

Hezekiah now has clear vision. He sees the situation for what it really is. He cannot find his way out of this situation on his own. Now, his life is on the line as well as those of his family and members of his administration. The future of the nation and Jerusalem are now at stake.

Why are the Assyrians here? King Hezekiah is why.

Hezekiah does not summon Isaiah; he respects him, and Isaiah had warned him. More than once. He had ignored Isaiah.

We are now beginning to see what true repentance looks like. YAHWEH sees his heart, so does Isaiah.

Notice the appeal.

Isaiah 37:3–4

“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. 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.’ ”” (NASB95)

He asks for prayer, but not for himself. He asks for prayer for the remnant, those who are still left in Judah. Then he asks for a rebuke on the blasphemy of Rabshakeh.

King Hezekiah was a good and Godly King. He brought revival to the land, but he had compartmentalized his life and thought that YAHWEH was not interested in government or the day-to-day issues of running Judah. He did not need God for that. This is the same error we make all too often. We forget that He wants relationship. Jesus calls us friends in John 15:13 – 15 “No one shows greater love than when he lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” (ISV)

Did you see the condition, if we do what He commands us. It was no different for King Hezekiah. Was Hezekiah in complete obedience? Hardly.

YAHWEH was involved in his life at Temple, and at home. But not at work.

Now he is not even confident that the Lord will hear his prayers. “Perhaps the Lord your God...” as a statement to Isaiah tells us exactly where the heart of Hezekiah is. He is in despair. He knows it is all his fault. His heart is in the right place, he is now in a place that God can do something.

This request for Isaiah’s assistance was one of Hezekiah’s first major steps in the right direction. It probably points to Hezekiah’s desperation as he faced a hopeless situation. His mistake was a common one for many believers; they all too often refuse to consult or trust God initially and then, when things go bad, it is almost too late. (Smith 2007, 609)

Peter had the guts to go out on the water with Jesus, but what happened when he realized where he was.

Matthew 14:26–33

“When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out, “It’s a ghost!” And they screamed in terror. “Have courage!” Jesus immediately told them. “It’s me. Stop being afraid!” Peter answered him, “Lord, if it’s you, order me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come on!” So Peter got down out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came to Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he was frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, “Lord, save me!” At once Jesus reached out his hand, caught him, and asked him, “You who have so little faith, why did you doubt?” As they got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. Then the men in the boat began to worship Jesus, saying, “You certainly are the Son of God!”” (ISV)

Obedience without emotion is nothing more than discipline or will power. It is not love. You cannot take the passion out of love and still have love. True love manifests itself not only in acts but also in feelings. Affection and passion are indispensable aspects of love for God. (Deere 1993, 171)

Jesus Himself told us in Matthew 22:37 – 39 “Jesus told him, “ ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is exactly like it: You must love your neighbor as yourself.’” (ISV)

That was the standard for Hezekiah, and that is the standard for us. He failed and recognized his failure. He has a way to go before he gets there, so do we.

Do we truly love Jesus and place Him first in everything?

Jesus is not a doctrine, a theology, an abstract principle, a ministry, a church, a denomination, an activity, or even a way of life. Jesus is a person, a real person. And he demands that we put him above all of these good things. None of these things died for us; the Son of God did. None of these things controls our destiny; the Son of God does. (Deere 1993, 178)

John 14:6

“Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (NET)

David had a heart for God. We read his love songs to the Lord in Psalms. He made mistakes but he repented, got up and moved forward. We have that opportunity as well as we learn how to truly love Him and know Him as our Lord and Savior. He loves us so much He died just to be with us forever. I want to know that person better than I do today.

Isaiah 37:6–8

“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. 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.” ’ ” Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish.” (NASB95)

Isaiah already knows what God is going to do. He has already prophesied what He was going to do (Isaiah 14:24-27, 29:5-8, 30:27-33, 31:5-9.)

It appears that there was little to no delay in the message of encouragement back to Hezekiah from Isaiah. The message to Isaiah is one we need to hear as well, “Do not be afraid because of the words...” The words from the Rabshakeh were frightening, they were intended to be. The spin from him was all premeditated as was the blasphemy. This is part of how Assyria operated, it was practiced and pretty routine as far as they were concerned. This is the same word that Isaiah had for Hezekiah’s dad which were totally ignored, to his detriment. The response is very different this time.

Hezekiah is now in a place where God can begin to do something. Isaiah is fully aware God has promised to rescue the nation. Isaiah has heard those prophecies and he too should have that confidence, but he doesn’t. He walks by sight and not by faith.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:7 “For we live by faith, not by sight.” (ISV)

That takes some getting used to and Hezekiah has arrived at that point.

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