

The Assyrian Threat resisted through faith in God Almighty

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] So I'll ask this question again this morning and give a different answer.! What is Christianity about? Faith is one of the most, is one of the key planks of what! it is to be a Christian. It is a faith religion. Faith is knowing enough about the trustworthiness of the object that you are prepared to trust them. So you make an assessment, is this person, is this thing trustworthy? And if you say yes, you trust them. Even when you can't see how it's going to work out. Even when you can't see how it will end up. I remember once many years ago seeing one of these, now what are they called, events where you have horses and they trot around in formation and, is that called a gymkhana? Something like that. Please imagine this. Part of the course was a seesaw. A seesaw is strong enough for a horse to walk on. The horse was blindfolded and it had to walk up onto this seesaw as the rider said, go forward, go forward, go forward. And then there comes a moment when the seesaw tips and the horse has to go down and we know it will be all right. We can see what's happening. The poor horse doesn't know, can't see, has to trust the rider. Oh, this feels a bit funny.

This feels extremely funny. Oh, I'm getting, and then, oh, this is okay. And I think the horse, in a horsey sort of way, was exhibiting faith in its rider. And it seems to me that's quite a reasonable picture of Christian faith. We establish a relationship with God to begin with. We learn to trust him. And then he doesn't let us see everything and puts us into a situation where we think, this sounds, this feels a bit funny. Don't like this. And God says, trust me, it will be okay.

And then it's, this feels very funny. And then, oh, it is okay. That's the Christian walk of faith. Even when we can't see how it's going to work out, even when we can't see how it will end up.

There are other ways of living than faith. There's rationalism, which says, I will only trust when I can see the whole explanation for myself. The horse never had that option, did it? You would have to take the blindfold off and then the horse would say, oh, that's okay. But God doesn't do it that way. He asked us to trust him and then we'll understand. He doesn't say, I'll explain everything to you first, then you can trust me. It doesn't work that way around. It's also different from mysticism, which says, I will trust if it feels right. So that was the advice given to Luke Skywalker in Star Wars when he was attempting to bomb the Death Star. And Obi-Wan Kenobi said to him, trust your feelings, Luke. It's very bad advice, but that's the advice he gave. Trust your feelings.

Was it Obi-Wan? It did work. Yes, it's true, but that's not a precedent to set. And as Christians, we are not entitled to say, God, I will only trust you if it feels right. We are to trust him first, his word, and the feelings follow on from that. It's different from moralism, which is a religion about observing rules and rituals. Christianity is not primarily a religion of rules and rituals.

[3 : 43] It is a religion of relationship, and the relationship fundamentally is one of faith. Christians are justified by faith. Christians walk by faith. The Apostle said we walk by faith and not by sight.

And we need to feed our faith. We need to keep exercising faith. Otherwise, we shall fall. So, importance of faith. I flagged that up at the beginning. I think you'll agree this comes out through these chapters that we're going to look at. My plan is, first of all, to tell the story, and then to follow that on with four things you should know. So let's try and tell the story, first of all, which I'll try and do reasonably quickly. There is the city of Jerusalem. We're in chapter 36, verse 1. In the 14th year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So, the Assyrian army have come up against God's nation and have defeated the ring of fortified cities around Jerusalem. And now the Assyrian field commander, with two other people and a large army, not the whole army, not the large army, now advances towards Jerusalem and stands at the door.

Please could I have that microphone on as well? So, you're... Not too much. I'll come up close to it in a minute. So, if you look in chapter 36, the field commander, verse 2, stops at the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the washroom. So, there's the field commander. I've drawn a Nazgul. Those of you who know the Lord of the Rings, a dark, threatening, horrible, evil, enemy commander. This field commander comes up with his colleagues and with his army and they stop at this place, the upper pool, the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the washroom's field. That turns out to be significant.

Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, the palace administrator, Shebna, the secretary, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, went out to him. So, three of the officials come out to meet him. And this is... And the field commander, please imagine him like Darth Vader. So, I've got this microphone, haven't I?

This is what the great king, the king of Assyria says. On what do you base your confidence? You say you have strategy and military power.

[6 : 41] These are empty words. Just feel the threatening nature of this speech. And he probably didn't talk like that. He probably shouted it because I didn't have PA and microphones. But if you look through these speeches, we won't have time to look through them all in detail this morning, but they are powerful, powerful speeches.

And imagine yourself on the city wall overhearing this. And the field commander says, you count the number of soldiers you've got. You count the number of soldiers we've got.

Be afraid. You start trembling. Because there is no way you are going to escape being smashed, pulverized, raped, abused, defeated.

And you could imagine the cold shivers going down the spines of the people listening. He says, I gather you've been making an alliance with Egypt. They are rubbish. You lean on them, it's like leaning on a walking stick with a sharpened end on it, so you just put your hands straight through it.

And he misunderstands their, Hezekiah's reforms when he's got rid of the places of idolatry, told people to come and worship at the temple. He misunderstands that and he says, and if you say we're depending on the Lord, isn't this the one whose shrines and altars have been removed?

Verse 7. And then he says, let's, I'll tell you what, be absolutely, I'll tie one hand behind my back in this fight. I'll still beat you. I'll give you 2,000 horses if you've got 2,000 men strong enough and capable of riding them. And you don't, do you? And I'll tell you what, I've been so successful, it can't possibly be without your God telling me to do this. Verse 10. The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it. The Lord's against you. You're done for.

And Eliakim, that's what he said, the Eliakim and Shebna and Joah say to the field commander, please could you speak to us in the official diplomatic language which is Aramaic because you're speaking in the ordinary language that all the people on the wall can hear and understand.

[9 : 32] Please could we do this in the diplomatic language of Aramaic? And he says, why shouldn't the people on the wall listen? Because when this comes to a siege, they'll be the ones eating their own poo, they'll be the ones drinking their urine, they'll be the ones who compete as to whose baby they eat.

That's how bad sieges were in those days. And he says, they ought to know, shouldn't they? And the commander speaks again in verse 13 and says, hear the words of the great king.

I don't know who you think the great king is, but the field commander says the great king is the king of Assyria. Don't be deceived by this talk from Hezekiah about trusting the Lord.

The city, verse 15, will not be defended by the Lord. The city will be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. And then he starts making promises. Assyrians aren't so bad, you know. They've got a very bad press.

I know we're supposed to be cruel and ruthless and indefeatable. We certainly can't be defeated, but we're not so cruel and ruthless. If you come over to us, we'll take you somewhere else.

[11 : 02] Yeah, but you'll love it there. You'll have your own place. You can drink, drink water, you can plant. It'll be wonderful in exile. It'll be really nice. Which is a lie, of course.

And then in verse 18, he says, well, look at all, what makes you think you're so special? If you look through the geography of it, every single place I've come to, I've knocked them flat, and their gods couldn't help them. What makes you think your god's any different?

So this is a powerful, powerful, persuasive speech. And what he's trying to persuade them is to have knocking knees, fearful hearts, that their courage should evaporate like water trickling away, and they should just cave in.

I don't know whether you've ever had voices, thoughts come to you to attack your faith, but that's exactly what's happening here.

And there are some, it's not just a feeling, there are arguments that are being given, and some people might be taken in by those arguments. But the advice given here is don't reply.

[12:22] Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah go back inside to the king with their clothes torn. It's a sign of grief. And they say what the field commander has said.

Totally intimidating, actually. I put pretty frightening, which is a very euphemistic way of, a very sort of English way of saying, actually you would be totally panicked, I think, if you'd known that was happening.

Let's, I'm telling the story, so let's follow on into chapter 37. So what does, what happens? Hezekiah goes to the temple. It says, He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord.

He sent Eliakim, the palace administrator, to Shebna the secretary, the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah, son of Amos. They told him, this is what Hezekiah says.

This is a day of disgrace, distress, rebuke and disgrace. When people come to the point of birth, there's no strength to deliver them. It may be that the Lord your God will hear the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God.

[13:42] And he will rebuke him for the words the Lord your God has heard. Therefore, pray for the remnant that survives. So Hezekiah goes in deep sadness to the temple.

He sends the three chaps to Isaiah the prophet. And he says, let's understand exactly what's at stake here. This is not simply a military threat as such.

This is a threat to the living God. When the Assyrian king says, I am the king, the king of kings, I go where I want, I smash who I want.

When he says that, he is threatening the living God. Because God, these are your people. This is your city. Your name and honor are at stake with this.

So prayer. So rather than saying, looking at it from the point of view of sheer reason, we've got this number of soldiers, they've got that number of soldiers, sensible thing would probably be to surrender.

[14:58] Instead of doing it that way, they say, no, we're going to trust what God has said, and we're going to pray. And that's a good, he's understood the situation correctly.

That's what's at stake. God's honor. And it's a right reaction to pray. And maybe you, under stress and threat, have done exactly that same thing, because that's what's in a Christian's heart to do. God, you're involved in this. It's your honor. God, you're going to pray. And I turn to you in prayer. In verse 5, King Hezekiah's officials come to Isaiah, and Isaiah says to them, tell your master this is what the Lord says.

Do not be afraid of what you have heard. Those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen, I am going to put a spirit in him, so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword. When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lashish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libna. So there's a movement of the armies.

[16:18] They go back to where they were fighting before. And, verse 9, Sennacherib receives a report that Tirhakar, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him.

Of course, in those days, they didn't have radar. They didn't have Skype. And they didn't even have texts. So somebody would have run along saying, I think the army, the Egyptian army is coming. And they would have said, well, we're not quite sure about this. But best option is to go out and fight against them. That's verse 9. So it seems, you know, a sigh of relief.

But then it comes back with this. Say to Hezekiah, king of Judah, do not let the God you depend on deceive you when he says, Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.

Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them?

[17:29] The gods of Gozan, Haran, Reseph, and the people of Eden that were in Tel Asar. Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or Hena, or Iva?

It's the same argument again, isn't it? I smashed them. You're no different. You're no different. And Hezekiah now has this as a written letter.

And he takes this letter and brings it to the temple of the Lord. I don't know whether you've ever had a letter which has deeply upset you. Maybe a tax demand or something.

Oh dear. Hezekiah does the right thing. He takes this upsetting letter and he takes it before the Lord and he says to the Lord, look, this is what I've got to cope with.

This is what's being said and it's about you really and may you in your godhood, in your almightiness, come and do something about this.

[18 : 39] And there's this wonderful prayer in verse 37, 14. Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord.

And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.

You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O Lord, and hear. Open your eyes, O Lord, and see. Listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. It is true, O Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands.

They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods, but only wood and stone fashioned by human hands. Now, O Lord, our God, deliver us from His hand so that all the kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, our God.

[20 : 05] What a wonderful prayer. He's really grasped the almightiness of God, the majesty of God, and the way that God does not give His glory to somebody else, the way it is so deeply insulting to God to say someone else is the Almighty, someone else is the Lord of heaven and earth.

Hezekiah says, You are the Lord of heaven and earth. Assert that so that people know that You are the Lord. It's a great prayer. now, O Lord, deliver us from His hand so that all kingdoms on earth may know that You alone, O Lord, are God.

We pray a similar prayer when we pray, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May people know that You are the Holy One and no one else is.

May people in Brighton and Hove know that You are the Holy One. May Your kingdom come. May the Lordship of Jesus Christ extend.

May men and women bow to Him and say, He is King of kings. He is the Lord. No one else is. So Isaiah sends back this message in verse 21.

[21 : 44] Isaiah, son of Amoz, sends a message to Hezekiah. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says, Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the word the Lord has spoken against him.

The virgin daughter of Zion despises and mocks you. The daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride?

Against the Holy One of Israel. And by your messengers you have heaped insults on the Lord. And you have said with my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest trees, the choicest of its pines. I have reached its remotest heights, the finest of its forests. I have dug wells in foreign lands, drunk the water there with the soles of my feet. I have dried up the streams of Egypt. Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it.

[22 : 48] In days of old I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass. You see this massive statement about the Lord.

He planned all this. It was all in his hands from long ago. That's our God who plans things from long ago.

He plans the rising of nations, the falling of nations. He plans the upstarting of proud Assyria and he plans its downfall.

And Assyria thinks I've done all this. And the Lord says no you haven't. You are in my hands. It's still the same today.

The Lord God is not taken by surprise by the Brazilian elections or by the change in Donald Trump or Brexit.

[23 : 52] all these things are in his hands and he has planned them for his purposes. Long ago I ordained it.

In days of old I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. Their people drained of power are dismayed and put to shame.

They are like plants in the field, like tender grass, shoots like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me and because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth and I will make you return by the way you came.

And God says it might look to you as though you heard a random report about the king of Egypt and off you went. Well I knew that and I planned that.

And whether the deaths that we shall read about in a minute in verse 36 and the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp and when the people got up next morning there were all the dead bodies.

[25 : 08] So Sennachera, king of Assyria, broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. Verse 38, one day while he was worshipping in the temple of his god and his rock his sons Adrammelech and Sharazer cut him down with the sword and they escaped to the land of Ararat and Ezahad and his son succeeded him as king.

And maybe if you'd seen all those events on the news you would have said oh it's another palace coup and you might have said I don't know how those 185,000 soldiers all died.

maybe there would have been some apparent explanation for it some secondary cause that God says look I did all this. Please understand that whether it's done directly or through the processes of history whether it's done very quickly or in the fullness of time I am the sovereign God.

He sits on the throne of the universe and does all things according to the counsel of his will. Assyria boasts sorry Isaiah sends this message Assyria boasts but I the Lord planned it and he also says to the people in the city you will survive in verses 30 to 35 he explains the time scale of this it'll be a close thing this year next year they'll have more food and the following year things will be somewhat back to normal verse 32 out of Jerusalem will come a remnant out of Mount Zion a band of survivors the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this please get that zeal bit God is saying I am determined to save my people zealous enthusiastic nowadays you would say passionate this is something

I am going to do and nobody is going to stop me doing this and that silly Assyrian he won't stop me no matter how big he thinks he is he won't stop me saving my people I will do it because I promised to and it says in verse 33 he will not enter this city or shoot an arrow there he will not come before it with a shield or build a siege ramp against it but by the way that he came he will return he will not enter this city declares the Lord I will defend this city and save it for my sake for the sake of David my servant and the bottom line is huge devastation to the army just says that's what happened and Sennacherib goes back and he gets assassinated at some later point just as God has said we have a great God don't we and in this crisis Hezekiah found that to be true he's the same

[28 : 06] God in all our days in our big traumatic days in our ordinary days he's the same God who works his purposes out who says to me trust me in this situation today walk by faith and we praise the Lord who fulfills his promise and defends his people the other gods are wood and stone they make promises that they never keep because they're totally totally useless but our God is a faithful God it is his total characteristic that if he commits himself to something he will most definitely make good on that commitment unlike human beings but this is part of the essence of God's glory that he keeps his word and is able in his almighty to do whatever is necessary to keep his word

I digress for a moment on sort of American TV programs characters say I promise you we will escape from this inferno I promise you and I think this is me watching how can you promise that how can you make a promise like that what a foolish person to believe your promise it's all going to be okay I promise you how can you promise that you're not almighty people make promises that they actually don't have the power to keep it's a very nice thought but a bit useless really when God promises something because he is almighty he can do it you get that important point he can do it let's go to chapter 38 because I'm telling the story in those days now I wasn't quite clear whether in those days meant afterwards or around that time or maybe earlier but it's a sort of separate story in those days

Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said this is what the Lord says put your house in order because you're going to die you will not recover get ready to die that's what people do we are mortal creatures the wages of sin is death we all die Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord remember O Lord how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your

eyes and Hezekiah wept bitterly I find that interesting he weeps and prays the Bible does say that he was pretty much unequalled in his faithfulness as a king he did do the right thing he didn't get people to follow idols and he did have the faith in this remarkable crisis so I think he can honestly say

I've walked before you faithfully and wholeheartedly I feel a bit sorry for himself in weeping we're all going to die it's part of the deal of being human but he weeps about this and in God's mercy verse 4 the word of the Lord came to Isaiah go and tell Hezekiah this is what the Lord the God of your father David says I have heard your prayer and seen your tears I will add 15 years to your life and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria I will defend this city so death threatened but I'm going to well not defeat death but postpone it for 15 years and I will defend this city there's the city and he says there's a sign that will go with this and the sign is something about the shadow cast by the sun this is the

Lord's sign that the Lord will do what he has promised I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down by the stairway of Ahaz so the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down so not quite sure what that looked like but a sign was given and confirmed this verse nine and onwards and in it he says which verse did I have verse 17 surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish in your love you kept me from the pit of destruction you put all my sins behind your back so here's a psalm of somebody who knows what God's grace is God is kind to him and compassionate towards him even though he Hezekiah is a sinner he says you put your sins behind my back and heard my prayer

[33 : 28] God does that doesn't he he doesn't always give us what we ask for but he does hear prayer I want to encourage you to keep praying I know some of you pray for your children keep on praying God hears prayer I know some of you weep over your children God sees!

the ancient Bible teacher Augustine for a long time lived a wayward life and his mother Monica Saint Monica as she gets called Santa Monica prayed and her pastor said surely God will see your tears and hear your prayers and in due course Augustine was converted to Christ and became one of the great teachers of church history perhaps we'll look at him when we do church history with the boys and girls let's go on to chapter 39 so Hezekiah is healed from this life threatening illness so now seems almost a footnote but it's actually quite an important footnote at that time Merodoc Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent

Hezekiah letters and a gift because he had heard of his illness and recovery so let's there's Babylon with a leaning tower not the leaning tower it's the tower of Pisa like the hanging gardens of Babylon the great tower of Babylon Babylon is an ancient enemy and although there was a counter example basically Babylon is just seen as the enemy and they come along and they say we're so pleased let's send those visitors with their present we're so pleased to hear that you've got better from that lethal illness you mean a lot to us and we'd just like to express our brotherly appreciation and we're with you on this maybe look round so these Babylonian envoys come and for some reason Hezekiah forgets security clearance anything like that would you like to see round yes and he shows them what was there the silver the gold the spices the fine oil the entire armory the entire armory was that a wise thing to do everything found in his treasures there was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that

Hezekiah didn't show them why did he do that was he boastful some of the commentators seem to think he was boastful was he just!

did he not put two and two together Babylon is going to be the has been our ancient enemy and will be the next bigger enemy than Assyria what are you doing showing them what a worthwhile target you'll be because that's what he's basically doing and Isaiah comes along and says verse 3 what did these men say and where did they come from and Hezekiah says from a distant land sort of fairly relevant long long way away I'm just thinking about wise men who came from the east to visit Jesus different motivation same journey these come from a distant land they came from Babylon and the prophet asked what do they see in your palace and Hezekiah said well everything a whole lot there's nothing among my treasures I didn't show them and Hezekiah brings this rather stern word sorry

[37 : 32] Isaiah brings this stern word hear the word of the Lord Almighty the time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your fathers have stored up until this day will be carried off to Babylon nothing will be left says the Lord and some of your descendants your own flesh and blood who will be born to you will be taken away they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king

of Babylon he's doing thing about the future now and Hezekiah says the word of the Lord you have spoken is good and he's thinking there will be peace and security in my lifetime it's an interesting thing for him to say isn't it because actually that's a very that's that word is oh it's devastating because after all these years of patience that

God has been putting up with his people and saying you must be careful I'll send you into exile if you don't turn round and here they just managed to have faith and God says you know this is just a blip because after all my patience you're still such a sinful bunch of people you won't escape going to Babylon and Hezekiah says that's okay I think he's a bit short sighted he's thinking about his own lifetime he said well at least there'll be peace and security in my lifetime well fair enough who wouldn't want peace and security but he's not really taking the long view is he even I can't remember what Winston Saunders quote was the best of men what do they say the best of men are men at best and here's Hezekiah showing us that although he ranks among the greatest of the kings he still isn't perfect he's still not the full fat glorious king he doesn't cut it so that's the story so I said I'd tell you the story which I've done and four things that we ought to know so number one the city and the king have been the subject of multiple previous promises and warnings so we just came straight into the story but you ought to know that it's part of a bigger longer story which is still going on so here are some of the references for that it goes back to Abraham the father of the Jews the first person that God called and said I'm going to bless you and your offspring and through you all the nations of the world will be blessed Abraham the man of faith of which is said in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 10 he was looking forward to a city so it starts back there it takes in Moses God founded the nation!

through Moses so we're no longer a family but a nation and in Deuteronomy 28 and 29 he very clearly spells out the terms and conditions of being God's people if you appreciate me if you're thankful and glad and obedient you'll be blessed but if you rebel if you're ungrateful if you're disloyal if you spit it back in my face you will be well you will be what you will be sent to a foreign distant country that's always been the terms and conditions of the setting up of that people and that city and you see this is actually what's going to click in Hezekiah said they're from a distant country that's fairly irrelevant isn't it these visitors and Isaiah said actually that's exactly the place that God will send you if you're a disobedient people if you're an ungrateful people let's pick on King David because he was the first or essentially the first king the model king for his people and God made promises that there would always be a David king that his throne would be occupied! [42 : 05] forever and they would have thought how is that going to happen how will there be a forever! Kings die don't they? How will there be a forever king?

And the city God plans for his city to be the eternal city but what a sad contrast with the earthly city of Jerusalem which failed and failed in so many ways right back at the beginning of Isaiah is full of idols and like just like the pagan nations and despite this wonderful success that we've read about they're still bound by sin and exile is where they're headed for but this city is the subject of promises and the promises stretch on beyond sin and beyond threats to the destination that God has in mind I will save my people and the apostle Paul pins that on not just the church as a general thing but as on individual Christian people and he says you are part of that if you belong to Jesus Christ you are part of God's eternal plan he chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight and his plan goes right back before Abraham before Moses before the creation of the world to include you to say I want this person to be in my holy city and I will move heaven and earth to get you there my name and my honour is at stake how could I possibly let any one of these people who have trusted in me go and you as a believer are as secure as Hezekiah's city was as he called on the almighty to save his city so that's number one number two worth knowing that the story that we've gone through is actually a replay of what happened a generation previously a generation previously King Ahaz who's Hezekiah's father correct me if I'm wrong I think that's correct had a similar threat it was the time when perhaps not the Assyrians but some local kingdoms chapter seven arranged themselves against King Ahaz his kingdom and it says the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken as the trees of the forest were shaken by the wind and Isaiah went out and talked to him too and Isaiah went and talked to him in exactly the same place that the field commander was so a generation before I'll read it to you go and meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the washerman's field so that was the place that

Isaiah a generation before had met Ahaz and said trust in the Lord that's the same place that the field commander had said don't trust the Lord it's a replay of what happened a generation before and the generation before he failed they actually decided to trust Assyria and Isaiah said you will so bitterly regret that because you make friends with them they'll come back and bite you what you think is the remedy will actually turn into a poison and Ahaz was offered a sign do you remember that that the prophet said to him you'd like confirmation of this ask the Lord your God for a sign whether in the deepest depths or the highest heights and Ahaz said oh don't bother no I don't think I bother the Lord on that no what a stupid thing to say what he was really saying was [46 : 33] I don't think God can do it at all and I'm not interested if he can foolish foolish man he was offered a sign it's a replay Hezekiah had this sign Ahaz was offered a sign he refused!

it but this time round second time round lesson learned Hezekiah prayed and trusted and it worked great thing if we learn lessons second time round isn't it Christians make mistakes and by God's grace we pray that our mistakes won't be irredeemable but even our mistakes are in God's hands good to learn a lesson the second time round and the lesson that he learned was of course that it's always worth listening to God and God can do whatever he says he will do and Hezekiah had a wonderful grasp of the majesty of God the almightyness of God oh God you who are enthroned between the cherubim you are the Lord of heaven and earth and that's that's faith isn't it so third thing

I want you to know this was a triumph of faith it was against fear now brothers and sisters we all know what fear is and God says essentially don't be fearful trust me don't be fearful trust me I'm saying this nice and emphatically to you sometime later you can come and say this nice and emphatically to me because we all need somebody to say this to us at some point it was a triumph of faith against theological deception because I don't know whether you noticed how many of the words that the field commander had were actually theological the Lord has sent me against you the Lord will not deliver these are theological statements and it's important that the people of God have the right theology and understand what God has committed himself to and understand what he hasn't committed himself to the evil one will deceive us and we need not to be deceived it was a triumph against temptation because all the while in Hezekiah's court there were some people saying master we've done the statistics on this Egypt has got a gross domestic product of such and such they'll help us this must be the right thing to do!

Hezekiah's saying no but the Bible says I should trust the Lord I should not go down to Egypt and trust in horses a battle against temptation you've probably got voices in your head maybe even as you're sitting there saying don't trust the Lord there's another way of doing this and I repeat it worked faith in the Lord works now let me just try and be careful faith in what the Lord has actually promised he will do it's not faith in whatever we think he ought to do but what he's promised he will do he will do because he's almighty so it's not a stupid thing to trust in the Lord the field commander was saying it's foolish what have you got to show for that look at my CV of defeats I mean come on but the those who trust in the Lord will not be put to shame that's what it says those who put trust in the

[50 : 35] Lord will not be put to shame something to venture on Christians need to learn to walk by faith to see things by faith to value things by faith to act out of faith why am I going to the prayer meeting this evening because I believe God's word that he answers prayer that's why we go to the prayer meeting we act out of faith and so on fourth thing so I said number three it was a triumph of faith and the fourth thing I'm going to say is a failure of faith and I was thinking this morning is this the right heading it's a failure of something maybe I should have said it's a failure of hope but this story is also a story of failure because Hezekiah is not the saviour oh we would love it Hezekiah if you were the one who could solve all the problems and guarantee our security forever but Hezekiah just isn't up to it as we noticed there's a prophecy about the coming generation back in the time of Ahaz the virgin will conceive and bear a son and will call him Emmanuel Hezekiah is it you God with us well God was with them in that repulsing the Assyrian army but God with us in the sense that God is with us to stay and all is sorted no I'm sorry Hezekiah that's not you we're still wanting this son to come along a shoot from the stump of Jesse!

that's David's family line the spirit of the Lord will rest on him Hezekiah is that you are you the one upon whom the spirit of the Lord the spirit of counsel and wisdom might and military strategy are words associated with that is that you no I'm afraid it isn't I'm afraid it isn't it's not Hezekiah because as Isaiah says you know Hezekiah despite all you've done perhaps because of your folly but not

only because of that your people will go into exile you're not saving them from that the best earthly king is still flawed and even though Hezekiah defied death it was only a temporary thing he's not the forever king who defeats death forever and actually his son Manasseh was a terrible king and Hezekiah doesn't have the power to save his people from the future it's just not going to happen they're going to go into exile but Jesus succeeds where Hezekiah and all other earthly kings fail he there is no flaw in Jesus there is no bit at which you say oh I wish he hadn't done that or not too sure about that every single thing about Jesus is totally perfect and totally brilliant and when he prayed in the garden he prayed not my will but thy will be done and that's how he saved us and that's how he is our saviour and when death threatened him he went down into death and he wasn't just given another 15 years but he rose from the dead and low in the grave he lay Jesus my saviour he tore the bars away

Jesus my lord up from the grave he arose the mighty triumph over his foes that's the saviour that's the real king that's the one who can sorry cliche too far that's the one who can save past present and future sins and all people as they are he's the one who can save and they look forward to him as we thank god that he has come let's sing