

Glimpses of Glory God Delivers

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[0 : 00] It would be great if you could go to the St Paul's app, open it. You'll see three main points as we look through today's passage. The focus of faith, the response of faith, and the life of faith.

Let's pray. Father God, we ask that you would help us to see you as glorious and as gracious. We pray that you would give us insight into our own faith and who it is that we are ultimately trusting where our faith lies.

How much of it is relying upon ourselves and how much of it is completely sold out, dependent upon you. Give us insight and particularly, Lord, that you would change our hearts, that we would see ourselves as we truly are and that we would trust in you.

Amen. So first of all, the focus of faith in chapter 36, it opens with the Assyrian army, not just breathing down the necks, but actually the very gates of Jerusalem. What Isaiah does not include in this retelling of the story, which you could also go to two kings and see the same information, is that King Hezekiah of Judah has already attempted to buy off the Assyrian army by presenting him with treasures that he took from the temple in Jerusalem.

That is, what Hezekiah has already attempted to do is to buy off the king of Assyria by robbing God from the treasury of the temple. Sennacherib is the king of Assyria, the terrifying king of the nation of Assyria.

[1 : 30] We are told here that he is in this moment in Lachish, which is 45 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem. That's where he is. Archaeologists in the past discovered a pit in Lachish that is one hole with approximately 1,500 corpses in it attributed to Sennacherib and his conquest of Lachish on his way to Jerusalem.

And so from there, when he is there obliterating that town, he sends a message, he sends a delegation to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem and says, Guys, it's your turn next.

We're coming for you. We are told in verse 2 that a meeting of the delegation from the two leaders, two nations, happens at the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the Launderer's Field.

And you go, why do we need to know that where it is? It's because we've already been here before. That's why we need to know that. We were here in chapter 7 of Isaiah, exact same place, the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to Launderer's Field.

This is where Isaiah the prophet had met with King Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, back in chapter 7.

[3 : 04] And in that moment, in chapter 7, God had offered to rescue King Ahaz from the threat that he was currently under from the nation of Aram and the northern tribes of Israel.

What did Ahaz do in chapter 7? Did he turn to God in trust? No, he made a political alliance with Assyria.

And now Assyria is about to destroy Jerusalem as well. And the question is, as you come to verse 2, will Hezekiah make the same mistake as his father and go for another political alliance?

Or will he trust in God for his security and deliverance? In fact, the issue is right there in verse 4 on who is it that Hezekiah trusts.

This is what the great king, the king of Assyria says, On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have counsel and might for war, but you speak only empty words.

[4 : 21] On whom are you depending that you rebel against me? What value is there, Hezekiah, in you trusting in your God who doesn't offer you a battle fleet?

There's no intercontinental ballistic missiles in your arsenal. You don't have fighter jets parked for the air force in the back of Jerusalem there somewhere.

All you have, Hezekiah, is mere words. Literally is what that means. Mere words. Empty words. Just words. That's all you've got. And what follows from the Assyrian commander in the delegation is a masterpiece of military propaganda.

And he makes two points really in this speech. The first is don't trust in Egypt. That has already proven to be true because they've made an alliance with Egypt. And Egypt hasn't turned up. So that was pretty stupid. So don't trust in them. It's only going to end in tears. In fact, it already is. The second point he makes is really the heart of the speech.

[5 : 33] He says, don't be deceived into trusting in God either. Don't trust in God either. And there's really two points to that speech.

First of all, he says, don't forget Hezekiah has already removed all the high places. You know, from the perspective of the field commander is actually you shouldn't trust in God because Hezekiah has ticked off God by demolishing all the worship places.

He sees it purely from the perspective of you're actually not worshiping God enough. God's not on your side at all because you failed him in some kind of way.

Of course, what he doesn't realize is that Hezekiah has done exactly the right thing by removing all the high places of the false gods. But in verse 13, he says, here's the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

This is what the king says. Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says the Lord will surely deliver us.

[6 : 43] This city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Don't trust Egypt. Don't trust your God. Who then should you trust? Verse 16.

This is what the great king of Assyria says. Make peace with me. Trust in me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern.

Until I come and take you to the land like your own. A land of grain and new wine. A land of bread and vineyards. Sennacherib, through his delegation here, is offering Judah the exact same salvation that God has already offered them.

In Egypt. Put your trust in me and I will take you to the promised land of land flowing with milk and honey. With vineyards and everything that you could imagine.

And so Sennacherib comes in through his delegation and says, Don't trust in your God. Trust in me. I can deliver it for you. Come and I will take you to the promised land of mansions and a solid career and influential friends with a big superannuation account.

[8 : 13] Trust in me and I will deliver the great life where you can have your ski holidays. Where you can sun yourself on tropical islands.

Come to me and you'll eat the choices of food. The wagyu steak. And come to me and I will offer it to you. The good life. The Syrian commander here uses the word trust seven times in his speech. It's the key issue. And in this context, the word means to throw oneself down on one's faith.

To lie extended on the ground. It means deep, deep and entire dependence. It means coming to an end of yourself. In other words, come to Sennacherib.

Total submission to him and he will give it all to you. He'll give it all to you. Just bow before me. Of course, ultimately, that leads to some form of a slavery, doesn't it?

[9 : 27] And so the question is, is King Hezekiah so crazy that he would confront such a great army with mere words? Why doesn't he just trottle off and just submit himself to Sennacherib and have the good life?

Is faith in the promise of God and the gospel enough? Is God's word enough? Does it contain everything necessary in life and salvation? That's the question of the first 39 chapters of Isaiah. And the answer to that question, it depends on who you think God is. If you think he's just another version of Sennacherib, just a greater one, then no, he's not. The answer on who God is, we get that in Hezekiah's prayer in chapter 37.

Chapter 37, verse 16. Firstly, we read that this God that he trusts in is the almighty God. You know, Sennacherib might be the great king of Assyria, but this is the almighty God.

There is no limitations to his power. The Lord Almighty is the Lord of hosts, which means that he has an angelic army at his disposal. Again, in verse 16, we see, secondly, that he is the only God.

[10 : 46] He is not just one king amongst the member of kings of the universe around the world, sorry, at the time. He is the only God.

Unlike every other deity in the world at its time, Hezekiah's God is not a national God. He's not like one of the gods of the nations that Sennacherib has already destroyed.

He's the God over all the kingdoms of the earth. Even we see at the end of chapter 37, Sennacherib's own God could not save him from the hand of almighty God.

Thirdly, and again, in verse 16, he is the living God. Hezekiah's God is the one who made the heaven and the earth. Other gods are made.

Assyria has defeated all these other gods of all these other nations, verse 19. But it tells us they're not gods at all. They're only wood and stone fashioned by human hands. They're nothing but idols. [11:49] But fourthly, unlike Sennacherib, the almighty, the great king of Assyria, Hezekiah's God is a merciful God.

Verse 16 again. We read that this Lord, this God, his God, is enthroned between the cherubim. This is more than a claim that this God is in heaven surrounded by angels.

This is a very specific location we are told here is between the cherubim. Between the cherubim.

The ark of the covenant in the temple had two cherubims sitting on top of it.

And the ark contained the word of God, God's word, his presence amongst his people. And the ark shared the same dimensions as the footstool of the royal throne.

In the palace of Jerusalem. In other words, what it's saying here is that God's throne where he ruled the nations was in heaven and his presence in the world was his footstool.

[13:08] We see that, in fact, at the end of Isaiah chapter 36. 66, sorry. At the end of Isaiah. That the earth is his footstool.

In other words, it's his presence. The ark of the covenant is his presence in the world. His word is his presence in his world and how he rules and navigates his world.

But between the cherubim. Between the cherubim was not only the place of divine rule. It was also the place of divine mercy.

Because in Exodus 35 verse 12. Between the cherubim. Was the atonement cover. The place where the atonement for sin was made.

By the high priest. On the day of atonement for the sins of the nation. In other words, this God of Hezekiah is not just greater than Sennacherib.

[14:09] He is also a merciful God. Who forgives the sins of his people. So, friends, I want to ask you to think about your own life for the moment.

Think of the things that give you cause for worry and anxiety. Think of the things that wake up. That maybe cause you to not sleep. But also bring you awake in the morning. The first thought of the day.

Think of the people. Or the circumstances you fear. The things you can't control in your life right now. And you've been trying to control them. And so anxiety and worry is building up. Maybe it's people whose acceptance that you crave.

Or it might be people whose rejection that you really fear. Think of the threats to Christianity and the church in our society. Or of the nations right now. Who are persecuting God's people around the world.

In such a way that they can't meet like we're meeting this morning. Now compare them to the God of the Bible. The Lord Almighty. God over all. The maker of heaven and earth.

[15:11] The God of atoning mercy. He and he alone is the antidote to fear. His perfect and powerful love drives out fear.

And so the question that is posed for Hezekiah right now and for Judah is also our question. In whom do you trust? Where do you look?

Where are you looking? So let's move on to the second point. The response of faith.

Hezekiah makes his move. He makes his choice. He responds in faith. We see that at the beginning of chapter 37. Verse 1. When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes. He put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord.

Hezekiah here, what he does here is an act of public self-humiliation.

[16:16] The king is meant to wear the finest of clothes. He's meant to maintain his dignity.

And here he rips off those clothes and he covers himself with sackcloth publicly. But this is not a man wallowing in self-pity.

Because we are told he goes straight to the presence of God in the temple of God. Goes straight there. In fact, he goes into the presence where the Ark of the Covenant is. He goes straight there. Straight to the temple. And to his lasting credit in this moment, what we see is that Hezekiah gets real with God. He understands in this moment that what really matters is not his relationship with Sennacherib, the king of Assyria.

The great king of Assyria. What matters is his relationship with the almighty God, the king of heaven. That's what matters. We also see in this moment that he sends off his prime minister and his bishops with a message to Isaiah.

[17:32] Verse 3. This is the scenario. This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace.

As when children come to the moment of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. What that statement is, it's an admission of complete personal failure and powerlessness.

What Hezekiah is acknowledging there is that his alliance with Egypt, his foreign policy has just, all it's done is angered Assyria and it's also brought the Lord's rebuke.

Notice the statement there. It's disgrace and it's rebuke. Jerusalem is so hopeless in this moment. It is compared to a baby whose mother doesn't even have the energy to deliver her. This baby is about to die.

[18:45] There's nothing left. There's no alternatives. He is helpless. Judah is helpless. They are out of options and Hezekiah is personally humiliated.

He has come to an end of himself. And he finds his deliverance in God alone.

Verse 36. Right at the end of the chapter. The deliverance comes. God secures the victory and rescues his people as he said he would.

Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 in the Assyrian camp. And when the people got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies.

Jerusalem didn't lift a finger. They didn't even know it happened. They just simply woke up the next morning and the Assyrian army's been decimated.

[19:53] That's it. It was done. And the chapter ends with Sennacherib himself assassinated by his sons in his temple.

His God could not save him. His misplaced trust was a deeply misplaced trust. The enemy of God and his people are defeated.

They're defeated. It's a spectacular display of divine glory, power and majesty. And why did it happen? Why did it happen?

We're given only one clue in these chapters as to why it happened. Chapter 37 verse 21. Because you prayed.

Because you prayed. Hezekiah prays for the victory of God. That's what he prays for.

[21:05] And God responds by killing 185,000 soldiers and rescuing his people miraculously. Was the content of his prayer, God, I call you now to kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers?

Because that will bring the victory. No, it wasn't at all. Save us, God, from these people. What was the content of his prayer?

Verse 4. 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, and that he will rebuke him for the words the Lord your God has heard.

The essence of his prayer is God pursue your glory. Pursue your glory.

Your name is being mocked. Can you put up with that? If God was to rescue his people, it will not be because the people deserved it in any way whatsoever.

[22:28] It's not because Hezekiah deserved it in any way whatsoever. But because God's honour demands it. And Hezekiah has got to that point.

A complete end to himself. Commenting on verse 4, John Oswald in his commentary on Isaiah, chapters 1 to 39, says this. This kind of admission of helplessness is frequently a necessity before divine help can be received.

So long as we believe we only need some assistance, we are still treating ourselves as the lords of the situation.

And that latent pride cuts us off from any help that God would give us. Only when we have admitted our complete bankruptcy are we able to receive what He has for us.

The response of faith, the response of faith in God, is not needing some assistance from God.

[23:40] You know, God, I've got most of the way there. You know, look at the good things I do. Look at the things I've done. I'm generally a good person. Don't forget, I go to church and I give money and I help the poor.

I just need a bit extra from you. It's not some assistance. It is admitting complete bankruptcy, complete helplessness.

Hezekiah here has a remarkable, he is a remarkable example of faith in God despite the circumstances. He comes to an end in himself and he trusts in nothing, but God's promise to pursue his glory in the nations.

So just reflect on a moment, your prayer life in the last week. Is it like Hezekiah's? Well, I mean, in the content of your prayers, particularly think about it if you're not prayed at all.

Because the content of your prayers or the lack of your prayers would be an indication as to whether or not you've completely come to yourself, end of yourself, in all things.

[24 : 59] Too often I hear in prayers, and myself as well, I need your help, God, just get this thing over the line. Got a great plan lined up here?

Just tick it over the line for me. Just push it over the edge so that, you know, God, bring glory to yourself by bringing success to my plans. God, I want you to fix this thing.

Because in my mind, when you fix that thing, then you'll be honoured. That's not what Hezekiah does. He is a remarkable example of faithfulness in this moment, of coming to an end of himself and putting his trust in Almighty God.

And so be like Hezekiah. See your powerlessness in all situations, trust the Word of God, and pray. This is a case study of faith, of genuine faith in God, so have the faith of Hezekiah.

If I left it there, all I've done is I've just lumbered you with a bunch of guilt to pull up your socks and try a lot harder. Try a lot harder. And burden you to have more faith.

[26 : 19] The central basis of our relationship with God is not how much our hearts are set on God by faith, but how unshakably His heart is set on us.

That's the central issue of the Christian walk, of the walk of faith. How much His heart is set on us. And Judah's only hope here is not the faith of Hezekiah, but God's heart for His people.

That's it. And the situation here of Jerusalem that it's found itself in points to a much bigger issue for all of humanity that the Bible and the Christian faith reveals that we need deliverance from, that we are powerless in.

It's so big, we can do nothing about it at all. No amount of negotiation with God can fix this problem. Ephesians 2 says that every single human need needs deliverance from sin and God's wrath.

I'll read it out to you. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the rule of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

[27 : 38] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and the following its desires and thoughts. And like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

What that says there is that all of humanity is dead in sin and transgressions and deserving of God's judgment. Dead means, dead people can't help themselves.

We are powerless for our own deliverance. Every human being, according to the Bible, has lived life doing what the commander of Assyria has done and it has mocked, mocked the living God.

Every human being has done exactly what Sennacherib has done and sought his own gods for his salvation. Every human being. And Ephesians 2 says the battle lines are drawn between us individuals and the creator God.

And when you put the almighty and only God, the creator of all that is, against you, the human being, your powers. You've got nothing. We are helpless, we are hopeless, we have no power to rescue ourselves or deliver ourselves.

[28 : 58] We need help. We need someone to deliver us. Did you notice that in the text as it was read through?

The residents of Jerusalem are on the wall watching this, listening to this delegation go out and they were observers to it all.

Notice as well that they themselves did not rip off their clothes and put on sackcloths. Hezekiah did. Notice that they didn't go to the temple.

Hezekiah did. In the end, they were saved by the intervention of their king. That's why they were saved.

Not because they were worthy, but because of the intervention of their king. The king went in to the place of God and mediated on their behalf.

[29 : 58] The king humbled himself, took on sackcloth, was publicly humiliated. He emptied himself. He prayed for the deliverance of his people and the people of Jerusalem did nothing.

Nothing. It was a, on Hezekiah's behalf, it was a spectacular display of faith in God.

In that sense, Hezekiah rebukes us. But like us, Hezekiah had only fleeting moments of faithfulness.

He'd already tried to buy off Assyria. He'd already attempted to align himself to Egypt. And after this, in the chapters that follow in 38 and 39, especially 39, he again gets really chummy with Babylon and makes a deal with Babylon.

He's a flawed, flawed king. So don't be like Hezekiah because you and I already are.

[31 : 27] We already are in our faithlessness. Our faith in God wavers. We have our alliances. We trust in our superannuation fund. We trust in our connections.

We trust in our psychologists. We trust in everything else except in the living God who is more mighty over all things. Even while we say we trust in Him.

In chapter Hezekiah, what this section does for us is that Hezekiah points us to a greater king. We need a greater Hezekiah.

And Hezekiah, the descendant of King David, ultimately points us to Jesus Christ, the greatest descendant of King David. The New Testament doesn't just tell us that Jesus Christ is from the royal bloodline of King David and Hezekiah, but that Jesus Christ is divine Himself.

He's God. He didn't go, and Jesus Christ didn't go into the presence of God to mediate for His people. He came from the presence of God.

[32 : 37] to mediate for His people. Philippians chapter 2 tells us that Jesus Christ did not consider equality with God something that He would use for His own benefit, but that He humbled Himself and took on human form.

And when His ministry finally went public after His baptism, He went into the wilderness and He starts immediately doing battle with the enemy of God, the greatest enemy of God, Satan himself. and Satan says, come, come to me, follow me, just bow down and prostrate yourself in front of me, and I will give you all the nations of the world.

The very thing that Jesus has come to win for God, Satan says, you can have it all, just align yourself with me. come to an end of yourself, enter yourself and bow yourself down and worship me.

And what did Jesus do in that moment? He fought Satan with mere words. Not mere words, the word of God.

[33 : 54] But the battle was ultimately won when Jesus went lower still. Not just that He became a man, but He went lower still. It wasn't just that God took on human form, He went lower still.

The eternal God, the one who has been from everlasting to everlasting, the one who never ever had a beginning, came to an end on the cross.

He went to death on a cross publicly, the cross, the crucifixion of shame and humiliation on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Just on the outskirts of Jerusalem where everyone in Jerusalem could see. And He went to the cross and He paid the punishment for our sin because we have robbed God of His glory just like Assyria is doing right now.

And in going to the cross He satisfied God's just anger. There's no more debt to pay. God's just anger was not poured out upon us who deserve His judgment.

[35 : 18] He poured it out upon Himself. God didn't obliterate humanity. He didn't obliterate the Roman Empire. He didn't obliterate everyone. God obliterated Himself on the cross.

He turned His anger upon Himself to satisfy His judgment. He allowed Himself to be killed so that His enemies could be His friends.

God will be saved. That is the great victory that God has won for us. And in His resurrection Jesus defeated death so that those who put their faith in Him have completely all sin or failure removed and live forever in His presence.

So the two greatest enemies of humanity, sin and death, have been defeated by Christ on the cross and through His resurrection.

And this is a victory that is over everything that is broken, evil, wrong, corrupt and unjust in our world. It is a total and universal victory. And as Christians, we wait for Jesus to return to seal that final victory and take us into His land of plenty forever.

[36 : 46] He's promised us that. And make no mistake, you, I and every other Christian throughout humanity, we have not lifted a single finger for that victory to be ours.

Not a single finger. it is entirely of His. Entirely. So what does it mean to live by faith?

What are we to do? We are to look to Jesus for our eternal deliverance as Hezekiah looked to God in the temple. We are to look to the same God for our eternal deliverance.

We are not to try harder to be like Hezekiah for our deliverance. We look to the God that He himself looked to. To quote Tim Keller who died this last week, if you are falling off a cliff, strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch.

It's not the amount of your faith that matters. It's the object of your faith that matters. To continue your color. Salvation is not finally based on the strength of your faith, but on the object of your faith.

[38 : 12] Come to Jesus and put your faith in him. Weak faith is enough because he is a mighty deliverer. Secondly, what does it look to live by faith day by day, trusting in him?

Hebrews 12, so if you're a Christian, sit in the room, Hebrews 12 tells us to look to Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith. He's done it all.

He doesn't just describe for us or reveal to us what actual faith is. He's completed it for us. He's completed our faith.

He is the one, the glorious and powerful and patient and merciful one who we are told is risen from the dead and always lives to make intercession for us.

So not only has he made intercession mediating between us for our salvation, he mediates for us now in our faithlessness. He's in the throne room taking my weak prayers.

[39 : 19] Father, what Steve really means is this. he's interceding for me now in my faith. Father, don't forget he's with us.

He's one of ours. We love him. Therefore, I want to call you to confidently, boldly pray for the victory of God in your life and in this world.

Pray for his name to be honoured by you in your heart, in your mind. Pray for his kingdom to rule you, that his will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Pray that he would open the door to the gospel. Pray that he will give boldness to you, that he will save Chatswood for his glory.

And as we do that as his people, remember that today the enemies of the church of Jesus Christ, they're not political, they're not ethnic, they're not national. Ephesians chapter 6 tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[40 : 47] note as a disciple of Jesus if you are, that this is an enemy that is too great for you. And until our king comes from heaven to bring his total and complete renewal of all things, we will waver in our faith.

and note too that we don't desire the destruction of a single human being. We don't pray for the enemies to be crushed like Assyria was crushed.

As Christians, we do not kill our enemies, we pray for our enemies. We pray that God would rule in it, they would come to an end to themselves and that God would rule in their life just as Jesus taught us to.

The great battle today that God is fighting, the miraculous work that he's doing in this world is a battle that's not fought with swords, it's not fought with political force, it's not fought with alliances, it's fought with words.

Mere words, as the Assyrian commander said, but more than mere words, but with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for our deliverance and the deliverance of all people.

[42 : 18] It's a battle that's fought for the souls of all people, it is fought in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is fought with the words of the truth and with deeds of love and justice.

And all of that, all of that is shrouded, backed up by prayer as we plead for his glory and his grace to be revealed to the nations.

And the victory will come and it will come through word and prayer. Thank you.