

Power for the Worst Crisis

I. Power for Any Crisis

God has given us power for the worst crisis we could ever possibly face in our lives. No matter how difficult the problem, God has given us power that is greater than any crisis. Your problem may be looming big over your life, but you haven't been swallowed by a whale like Jonah was; you haven't faced the Red Sea with your enemies in pursuit, like Moses and the children of Israel faced; you may have marriage problems, but not to the degree that David and Bathsheba experienced in their marriage. You are not facing Goliath with a slingshot and a pebble! God gives us a multitude of examples in His Word because He wants us to understand and know that if He delivered these from the situations confronting them, He can certainly deliver us from the circumstances we are dealing with in our lives!

In the natural, you may be facing, what looks like an impossible situation. If you focus on your enemy, things look so bad. You begin thinking about the track record of the enemy and it looks like they have never failed. It looks like Satan is coming after you to completely destroy your life. But there is one very important fact to keep in mind. When Satan comes against you, he comes against God! If you are in fellowship with the Lord, standing on His promises, standing in faith, the enemy will not win! God declares in His Word that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. He declares our weapons are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. No matter what weapon the devil uses against us, God has already defeated it! God declares, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper." The Word also proclaims, "Let God arise and His enemies be scattered."

II. The Demoralization of Israel

Isaiah 36

- vs. 1 *Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.*
- vs. 2 *And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.*

- vs. 3 *Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiahs' son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.*
- vs. 4 *And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?*
- vs. 5 *I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, thou that rebellest against me?*
- vs. 6 *Lo, you trust in the staff of the broken reed, on Egypt; whereon a man leans, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.*
- vs. 7 *But if you say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: is not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?*

Rabshakeh employed propaganda and psychological warfare before war actually took place in an attempt to demoralize the enemy. Rabshakeh was standing outside Jerusalem telling the children of Israel, "I want to talk to your king." While he was speaking, the people of the city were sitting on the wall, silent. He reminded them, "You looked to Egypt for help and your king has displayed instability. One minute he trusts in God, the next minute he trusts in man. Now he is telling you to trust in God, but how can you trust a man who is always changing his mind? He is an unstable leader."

What Rabshakeh was telling the people was true. Hezekiah had turned to Egypt for help, but he had repented of his mistake and there had been a revival in the land during the past year. Isaiah had been teaching the people from the Bible and they had a great dependence upon the Lord.

III. Israel Tested in Trusting God

Isaiah 36

- vs. 14 *Thus says the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.*

vs. 15 *Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.*

Rabshakeh is telling the people, “Don’t let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord.” Hezekiah could not force anyone to trust in the Lord. All he could do was present the Word of God. It was up to the people whether they chose to believe the Word or not believe it. Rabshakeh is trying to provoke the people, “Are you blind followers? Why should you follow a man who has exhibited instability? The king is forcing you to believe in God. Don’t you have a mind of your own?”

vs. 16 *Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus says the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one waters from his own cistern.*

Rabshakeh is saying, “If you’ll come out and present me with a gift as a indicator that you will keep your word and give yourselves up, I promise you that you can eat your own food, have your own wives (this is drinking waters our of their own cisterns), I will not separate you from your families, you can have your own possessions. The only thing we will do is move you from your land and mingle you with other people.”

In that day, Assyria would remove their enemies from their homeland and mingle them with other countries and races so they would lose their identity as a nation and also lose their patriotism for their homeland.

vs. 17 *Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.*

He is telling them, “I promise, we will take you to a land just like your own. You will have your family and your possessions.” But his real motive was to demoralize the people, separate them from their homeland, therefore ending patriotism.

vs. 18 *Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?*

IV. Israel is Silent

vs. 21 *But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.*

The children were able to keep silent because of the Word of God that had been planted in their hearts, especially over the past year. Many are trusting God for healing and it looks impossible; it looks like death will be the outcome. Many are experiencing great financial challenges and it looks like the only way out is to declare bankruptcy. Many have been standing in faith for their marriage, and it looks like there is no alternative except divorce. Some have children who are in rebellion and on drugs and it looks like there is no chance of change in their lives and your family is being torn apart. People are looking at the circumstances of your life and saying, "You're still going to *that* church? You're still trusting in God and His Word? Don't you have a mind of your own? Are you a mindless robot? I've known others who trusted in the same God as you and they're dead today...their families are torn apart. Sure didn't look like trusting God helped them!"

One of the best things to do when confronted by doubt and unbelief is to shut our mouth...keep silent. Thoughts will come, but Jesus said, "Take no thought, saying..." You cannot stop thoughts from coming, but you can keep from allowing them to come out of your mouth. In fact, you can stop it in the thought realm by pulling every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Once a negative thought is released through your mouth, it becomes destructive. You can change things after a negative thought is released; it just becomes more difficult.

V. Keep the Good Report on Your Lips

When the twelve spies went into the land of Canaan to spy out the land, two returned with a good report, and ten returned with an evil report. They all saw the same thing, but the two who had the good report compared the giants with the Word of God and they knew the Word of God was greater! The ten who had an evil report compared the giants to themselves. Either we are looking at the Word of God or we are looking at ourselves. Whenever we are looking at ourselves, defeat is inevitable. But if we look at the Word of God, every enemy will be defeated!

VI. Jonah Opposes God's Plan

During the time of this incident, Assyria was one of the strongest nations on the face of the earth. Nineveh was the capital. During Jonah's day, there was a great revival in Nineveh. In fact, the city was about to be destroyed, but the destruction was averted because of the repentance of that nation. The Bible tells us in Jonah chapter 3, verses 6 through 10, that the revival was so great, everyone turned to the Lord. Imagine an entire city turning to the Lord!

A. Jonah Opposes God's Plan

When God called Jonah to preach in Nineveh, he was angry. Jonah's desire was for the nation to be destroyed. Reading the book of Jonah you learn that Jonah did not run from his call, he ran because he did not want the people of Nineveh to be preserved. God said, "You preach to them and I'll preserve them." Jonah thought, "Well, if I don't preach to them, they can't be preserved. If I preach to them, I know they'll repent and I don't want them to repent." He even spoke these thoughts to God! Jonah detested the Gentiles and had strong feelings of loyalty toward his people, the Jews. He detested the nation of Assyria and the Ninevites so much, he did not want them to turn. But just as God is merciful to us and has never given up on us, neither had He given up on the Ninevites.

Jonah was so determined *not* to go to preach to the Ninevites that he actually went in the opposite direction. But what Jonah did not expect or realize, was that a whale would be waiting to swallow him up! The whale took him back in the right direction. Finally, after three days and nights in the belly of the whale, Jonah repented and the whale spit him out. He went to Nineveh and only preached one word, "Repent!" From the least to the greatest did repent and the king of Assyria was one who repented (Jonah 3:6-8).

B. After the Revival

Revival did take place in Nineveh, but a mere nine years later, a man named Pul overthrew the king because of the condition of the nation. Pul had been the gardener and worked for the king. After taking the throne, Pul named himself Tiglath-pileser (II Kings 15:19, I Chronicles 5:26). He began a series of campaigns and became a very wicked king. He did not realize how long his nation would dominate, but for 200 years Assyria conquered the nations

that surrounded them. Assyria was located on a plain and had no natural defenses. It was often thought to be a nation that could be easily attacked and destroyed, but when Tiglath-pileser came to power, they became a fierce and horrible nation.

VII. Assyria's Rise to Power

Because of their location, Assyria should never have risen to be a world power. Tiglath-pileser had a son named Sargon the Second. Sargon the Second later had a son named Sennacherib. For 200 years Assyria had conquered nations and by obtaining the spoils, they had become the wealthiest nation in the world. Again, every time they conquered a nation, they would relocate the people to weaken them. As a result, no armies existed that could assemble themselves against Assyria to overthrow them. Assyria was one of the few nations that even conquered Egypt, although Egypt eventually rose in power again. Assyria's goal was to conquer every nation. They conquered the Chaldeans in the south and the Barbarians in the north and east. They conquered the Greeks (the Philistines of the day), the Egyptians, and finally, they conquered Judah. When they came to Judah, they had already conquered numerous nations and were undefeated. No one had ever lost against them.

VIII. Assyria's Strategies for Conquering Nations

Again, Assyria had a 200-year history of winning every battle. Because of their experiences in battle, when they came against Jerusalem, they knew how to intimidate and manipulate the people. They knew how to instill fear into their lives. They said to the Israelites, "We have conquered every nation, even those nations you sought help from. In addition to that, your king has exhibited great instability, so how can you trust in what he is saying to you? We will give you two options. Either you fight us and we will destroy you just as we have so many other nations during that past 200 years or you surrender to us. If you surrender we'll let you keep your family, possessions, and food. We'll simply translocate you to a country that greatly resembles your own country."

The choice seemed easy and obvious: voluntarily surrender. That is what most nations did when confronted by the Assyrians, especially since they were the largest and most powerful army in the world at that time.

IX. The Evil Report

The Assyrians had now come to Judah and were ready to conquer Judah, especially the city of Jerusalem. Judah has just gone through a weak time in their history. The king had gone to Egypt for help rather than to God. Because of this, Judah was in a weakened state and the king almost died. But when Isaiah came to King Hezekiah, he repented, turned his face to the wall, and for the past year the nation was rebounding because of the study of God's Word and seeking His face. Isaiah had been teaching the people and they were learning to apply to Word to their lives.

One of the greatest indicators of their strength was the fact that when the evil report came, they were silent. Rabshakeh was probably accustomed to people responding in fear—trembling, clutching their children, husbands and wives clinging to one another. But he had never experienced a nation who was silent before him. The people looked at him, turned, and walked away. The reason the people were silent is they knew when Satan gives his report, they needed to meditate and keep their eyes on God's good report!

At this time, Judah was militarily weak. It was the weakest it had been in many years. One reason they were weak is that prior to going to Egypt for help, Hezekiah had been in a long process of national disarmament. He was thinking, "If we are nice and disarm, the nations surrounding us will say, 'Aren't they a sweet nation? Let's do what they have done and disarm.'" The problem was other nations did not do this.

Isaiah 36

vs. 22 *Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.*

Isaiah 37

vs. 1 *And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.*

vs. 2 *And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.*

X. Isaiah's Report

They brought the report to Hezekiah and Isaiah gave the people his report in Isaiah, chapter thirty-three. In verse one he addresses the Assyrians. In verse 2, he addresses the Lord. In verse 3, he reflects on the enemy and their success up until that time. In verse 4, he prophesies of a serious destruction. In verse 5, he talks about how the Lord will deliver Judah. Finally, in verse 6, he reveals the reason the Lord can work in their lives.

Isaiah begins by addressing Assyria.

Isaiah 33

vs. 1 *Woe to thee that spoilest, (the Assyrians) and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.*

“Woe to you who spoils and was not spoiled” is referring to Assyria’s army and literally says, “You have conquered every nation but you have not been conquered.” For nearly 200 years, they had conquered every nation. No army had defeated them. Isaiah continues, “...and dealt treacherously”. Literally, they had stolen, raped, murdered, and parted families; all of these things happened to nations who would not surrender to them. He continues, “...and they dealt not treacherously with thee”. Many of the nations Assyria attacked were peaceful nations; nations Assyria had no reason to attack. They simply wanted to conquer territories around them.

Eighty-three years after this story, the Sythians would be hired by another nation to come from an outside area and fight against the Assyrians. They completely destroyed them. Assyria was no longer considered a nation because they were so utterly destroyed (Ezekiel 31:3-12; Zephaniah 2:13).

XI. Look at the Enemy, But Do Not Be Moved

Isaiah first addresses the enemy. There is nothing wrong with looking at the enemy; but we are to guard against the enemy. There is nothing wrong with looking at look at the symptoms. There is nothing wrong with looking at the enemy but the Bible says we are not to be ignorant of the devil’s devices. Part of the strategy for any team is to study the opponent. This is true of Satan. We need to study the Word of God. The Old Testament has very little to say

about the devil, but beginning with the book of Matthew through the entire New Testament, there are chapters and chapters dealing with Satan, the demons and their operation, sickness and disease. Some people do not want to admit they are sick. You can admit you are sick but at the same time declare that Jesus Christ took your infirmities and bore your sicknesses. He took them to the cross and with His stripes you were healed.

In this verse Isaiah is rehearsing the track record of the enemy in the people's ears. He says, "Even though this nation has been successful for 200 years, my God has been successful for two billion years! We'll always be successful and God is not a man that He should lie! We can always depend on him. He will never lose a battle. If God be for us, who can be against us? The Assyrians will be spoiled!"

Isaiah 33

vs. 2 *O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee:*

This is a command. Isaiah is commanding the grace of God to be with them. We can command the grace of God when we are in fellowship with Him. We cannot command the grace of God when we are in sin, doubting God's Word, or have turned our backs on Him. The entire nation had been studying God's Word and become doers of that Word, they were walking in God's will and suddenly they are attacked by Assyria. Some people believe that only time Satan attacks is when we are out of God's will; but he will attack us the greatest when we are in the will of God! The Word says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers us from them all."

XII. Waiting on the Lord

The word "wait" in the Hebrew is the word "quawah". This word means to wait in faith. Isaiah is saying, "Lord, not only are we waiting on You, we are waiting in faith. There is something behind our waiting; it is the Word of God."

...be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

Isaiah is again demanding the grace of God. He is asking that this nation depend on the strength, the arm of the Lord, who has delivered them in the past and will deliver them again. Even

though they are facing impossible odds against Assyria, Isaiah is asking the Lord to defend them.

XIII. Isaiah Prophecies Assyria's Destruction

Isaiah 33

vs. 3 *At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thysself the nations were scattered.*

Isaiah is saying, "Now Assyria is so strong they simply rattle their swords or yell and everyone scatters!" Rabshakeh has become so successful that as they raise a tumult and lift up their voice, nations are scattered. Literally, people will come out and give themselves up and Assyria will scatter them to the four winds and put them in different nations, removing them from their homeland.

vs. 4 *And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.*

Isaiah prophesies that the destruction of Assyria will one day be like a plague of locusts coming into a field of grain. In those days, when locusts invaded the land the invasions would often last for two weeks and the swarms were so massive, the people could not see the sun. Imagine waking one morning seeing what appears to be a black cloud coming across the horizon only to find that it is a swarm of locusts? Once the locusts went through, there was nothing left. Isaiah, addressing Assyria said, "That is exactly what will happen to you. One day you will be overrun by a military force that will attack in waves and like locusts invading a field, you will be destroyed." What Isaiah spoke was bold, considering he as addressing a nation who had not been defeated in 200 years, but he was speaking the Word of the Lord. God's Word is no less powerful when we speak it than if He spoke it directly out of heaven. When someone comes against a child of God, they are not coming against the individual; they are coming against God.

XIV. The Lord is Exalted

Isaiah 33

vs. 5 *The Lord is exalted; for he dwells on high: he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.*

First, the Lord is exalted because He dwells in heaven. He is also exalted when He sits on the throne of our heart. When our heart is filled with His Word, filled with His promises, when we have hidden them in our heart, we form a throne for the Lord Jesus Christ to sit on. God sits on high and can see the future. The future is hidden from us, but not from God. God is simply letting Assyria know that they will be destroyed.

vs. 6 *And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

Assyria was looking for gold, silver, diamonds, and possessions. We should be looking for wisdom and knowledge, which is hidden in our heart. The Hebrew says, “*Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stabilizer of your times.*” Stability is seen in the fact that the children of Israel did not open their mouth in response to Rabshakeh. What caused the people to put their trust in Isaiah and Hezekiah? It was the Word of God they had been taught over the preceding months. God will bring them through because of the Word in their hearts, which has brought stability. What is the “*strength of our salvation?*” It is the Word of God. The greatest treasure of our lives is the new birth and the exceeding precious promises of God. No one can steal the Word that has been hidden in our heart. No one can steal the salvation that is in our heart. In times of calamity, the Word will deliver you.

Isaiah 37

vs. 33 *Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.*

Isaiah is saying, “The Assyrians will not do anything to you. Not even an arrow will fly over the wall.” Think about how impossible that probably sounded. This is the army that had not been defeated in 200 years!

vs. 34 *By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord.*

XV. God’s Promise to Israel

vs. 35 *For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake.*

It does not matter what the world is saying. It does not matter what the circumstances are saying. It does not matter what the symptoms are telling us. None of these things have a future, but we do! God has prophesied over us that no weapon formed against us will prosper and He has promised we will spend eternity with Him forever! The city of Jerusalem is an eternal city. Assyria had no promises, but God gave Jerusalem many promises!

vs. 36 *Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand:*

The angle of the Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ, and 185,000 men were slain by the One Who fought for Israel—the same One Who fights for us!

XVI. Sennacherib Seeks His god

...and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

vs. 37 *So Sennacherib King of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.*

The few Assyrians that arose in the morning looked around and saw all that were dead. Sennacherib was so distraught he ran home to pray before his evil god.

vs. 38 *And it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.*

Sennacherib's sons murdered him. After his death, another son rose to power. But again, just 83 years after Assyria came against Israel, they were destroyed by another nation as it had been prophesied.

When we face enemies in our lives who repeatedly speak an evil report over our lives, we must remember that God also has a report. We must choose to believe God's good report about our lives.

XVII. Stability in the Battle

While Rabshakeh was giving his evil report to the children of Israel, they remained silent. While reports are coming at you from

the devil, do not say anything; turn to the Word of God. God has an eternal plan for our lives, which means we will be delivered from the problems we face. Romans 8 tells us we have already been justified; God sees us saved, redeemed, and glorified. Justification is past tense. Redemption is past tense. He says He has already seen us glorified and in heaven at the right hand of the Father, rejoicing in our glorified bodies forever! If Jesus sees us this way, we can trust that we will make it through every problem we face. Our problems will not last forever; we are going to make it through because our future is in eternity!

It does not matter what people say, what the doctors say, what friends and relatives say. It does not matter what your mind is saying. The same God Who prophesied that Israel would be preserved and the enemy would be destroyed, is the same God who will preserve you and destroy every enemy in your life.