

Isaiah 7

Isaiah 7:1-25

¹ Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to *make* war against it, but could not prevail against it. ² And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind. ³ Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field, ⁴ and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, ⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabeel"- ⁷ thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass. ⁸ For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, And the head of Damascus *is* Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, *So that it will not be* a people. ⁹ The head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, And the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established." ' "

What do we do in the face of a threat to that which we hold dear? What do we do when our lives, as we know them, are facing a danger? How do we think and respond when the plans that we made for our futures are facing a seeming insurmountable obstacle?

There is no sense pretending that this life is safe from harm. It isn't. There are a million ways to get seriously incapacitated or die. There are millions of things that can cause us pain, whether physical or emotional or financial. This life is simply full of threats. And there are few or no promises addressed to **New Testament Last Days believers** for life on planet earth to be pleasant or prosperous. There are lots of promises about our spiritual health and God's good intentions for us. But usually those promises have to do with things God will give us now to help us to endure and prosper spiritually until the end.

With all of this uncertainty, doesn't it seem that it would be important that we come up with a strategy for how we are going to deal with threats and dangers? Doesn't it make sense that we determine to set our faces like flint on a path we will pursue when we face such situations? Shouldn't we have a plan to deal with the dangers or perceptions of dangers that we know we will face?

I think it is utter foolishness for a person to fail to prepare for what they know they will face. We often say that about non believers. We ponder how, when

they know that everyone who is born dies, that they would not think to prepare for death. But so many of us as Christians do not prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually for the disasters we are most likely to face. On a sinful planet, we must face death, and illness and suffering. We know it will happen. If we breathe it will happen. So shouldn't we, of all people, with all the promises of God at our disposal, determine a mental path we will follow when the wolf howls at our door?

This morning we are going to look at a very bad example of someone facing a perceived threat. We will see how not to face a situation that threatens our safety. And we may find that we have too much in common with King Ahaz.

¹ Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. ² And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.

OK, in chapter six **Uzziah** died and Isaiah saw God on His throne. Uzziah led the country into very prosperous times and was a competent, but not very spiritual, king.

Now **Ahaz** is king. Ahaz's dad, **Jotham** reigned for 16 years and was a good king. I doubt that Isaiah was silent during all that time, but nothing is recorded during that time by Isaiah that we are sure of. It could be mixed in with some of the prophecies later in the book. We don't know.

But now Ahaz has taken over and he is wicked. So God begins to speak through his prophet Isaiah.

Ahaz reigned about 200 years after the 12 kingdoms split after Solomon's death. To put that into perspective, the US has only been a country for 221 years. So in terms of antiquity, this was not a very long period of time.

This is the situation. The 10 tribes of Israel were making alliances with Syria in order to stand against the almost certain invasion by Assyria. They wanted Judah in their alliance too, but Judah refused. Now Syria and Israel are joining up to attack Judah to force them join their alliance.

Verse 1 might talk about two invasions. We are possibly told about them in 2 Chron 28:5-8 and 2 Chron 28:17-18. Or it is possible verse 1 tells us the end of the story and then the rest of the chapter tells us the rest of the story so that there was really only **one** invasion.

Now, we have to understand, this is no small threat. Israel and Syria would have made up a larger force than Judea had. That force would seem to be undefeatable by Judea's troops. Logical people here would read writing on the

wall that is not true. Really, look at this. Shouldn't Ahaz trust his reasoning and his math? Shouldn't he be logical about this whole thing? Isn't that the reasoning of **our disbelief** too? Isn't that how we defend our faithlessness when someone tries to encourage us to overcome our fears with faith? Don't we express the reasonableness of our doubt? Don't we appeal to common sense? Don't we say, I am just thinking clearly. I have added this up and it is logical for me to live in fear of this or that. It makes sense for me to dread that which I imagine happening. We are all tempted to think like Ahaz.

Verse 2 tells us- **So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.**

Carla and I like to sit on our back porch and watch the wind blow the trees. She can tell how windy it is by how far down the tree the wind bends them. Well this people were like that. Their hearts swayed in the wind. And Ahaz led their disbelief.

We see a problem already. It is the problem of an uncommitted, unfocused heart. It is a life that has not staked its claim on the character and person of Christ. David shows an alternative here, a protection from a wavy heart.

Psalm 112:6-8

⁶ Surely he will never be shaken; The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. ⁷ He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. ⁸ His heart *is* established; He will not be afraid, Until he sees *his desire* upon his enemies.

This is where the people should have been. Unsteady hearts is where they are. Our hearts are meant to be steadfast. Our minds are intended to be committed to Christ, come what may. When they are the result is spiritual courage. We can face what comes in an unfaltering manner.

Look at what Paul tells us

Colossians 3:1-5

¹ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

He is saying, since you have your identity in Christ, since that is who you are now because of what He has done, do this. Fix your mind on things above. Fix your minds on those things you pray for when you pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Set your mind on those things.

Do you realize the implication here? This won't happen to you without effort. This won't just happen to you. You have to commit to it. You have to take action. You need to do the setting. Life's events won't cause this to happen. Life's winds will make our hearts sway if we have not already set our minds, and therefore our hearts, on a different subject matter. We need to actively be setting our minds on words that come from God's mouth. We need to be doing that when all is going well in our lives. Our lives need to rest on the bedrock of Christ. Only then are we prepared for the winds to blow.

And there is another thing to notice in our text. It is the **power of a bad leader**. Sometimes we as leaders are frustrated that people don't lead themselves better. Because it makes our work harder. But that is stupid thinking. If people didn't need leaders to lead, and serve, and direct them, he wouldn't **give leaders**. **Leaders are necessary** for the primary reason that all of us need shepherded. And if we choose not to lead when it is our obligation to do so, there will be chaos. And the chaos is a direct result of our failure to lead. Here Ahaz is leading. And he is leading in disbelief. He is leading in his **distrust in God**. And the people are following. They need a leader who will point them **to truth**. They need a leader that will **stand against them when they stray and strongly say, "trust God**. I will trust God and you can trust God too. Just watch. He will come through." But Ahaz doesn't. All he does by his leadership is aid the people under him in their own rebellion against God. That is leadership to avoid. We should never be like that.

Here we see Judah living completely at the mercy of their circumstances. They are acting as if there is no God. They are shaken like trees in the wind. The world around them is determining their state of being. They are believing what they see and perceive and calculate with no consideration of the promise and intention of God. They are depending upon their own power and their own resources. And they are in despair because they know their own resources will not carry them through this danger.

Too bad they won't believe in what Isaiah saw. Too bad they don't believe that **God is still on His throne**, not affected by the plans of man. Too bad they won't believe the words that come from God himself through the prophet Isaiah.

These people could have lived a much better condition.

They could have faced this dilemma quoting the words of the Psalms.

Psalm 16:8

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me; Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Psalm 62:6

⁶ He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *He is* my defense; I shall not be moved.

Have you ever consider how much of our lives we have wasted by not trusting God? Have you ever considered how much time we have spent worrying and fretting over life situations that God was in full control of? Have we ever considered how much better that time could have been spent if we had only taken God at His word and used the truth to silence our imaginations?

That is true spirituality. That is what true spirituality looks like. It simply believes God. It is not a **blissful ignorance**. It is an **informed trust**. It doesn't downplay the dangers. It accentuates **the power and love and grace of God** in the face of those dangers. It accepts **difficulty**, but it never accepts **defeat**.

It says with David, **Psalm 73:26**

²⁶ **My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

Faith accepts human limitations, but it will not accept any limitation upon God. It expects deliverance from Him.

So the people were moved by their circumstances. But they were not moved by their belief in God.

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God tells Isaiah to go meet Ahaz where he is making preparations for the siege against Jerusalem. He is checking out the underground water system that provides water to the city. Water was essential to survival, so it makes a lot of sense to be checking this out.

Now it is interesting that God tells Isaiah to take his son, Shear-Jashub. His name means **"a remnant will return."** Even while Ahaz may be fearing and preparing for the worst, this young man stands as a **tribute** to God **that says** God will never let the people of God be wiped out. The future of Judah did not depend upon Ahaz. It only depended upon God. Even the son's name would have been a rebuke to Ahaz for the current mindset he was in.

Now look at the message Isaiah is to deliver.

'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands

Take heed and be quiet may be better paraphrased as **"Be careful to do nothing."**

Why would Isaiah say this?

Well, we need to understand the position Ahaz was in. He was probably being pressured to form an alliance with Assyria to have Assyria come rescue Judah from this impending doom. The prudent and wise thing to do from a human perspective was to join forces with others against your enemies. And if Judah had no God that it could depend upon, that would have been a good idea. But for Judah to ally itself with any other country was to slap God in the face. God was to be their ally and they were to remain independently His people. God is a jealous God.

The temptation all throughout chapter 7 and 8 is to depend upon another country to do for Judah what God said He would do.

Suppose a wife needs a car. She tells her husband. Her husband promises to get her one and then begins the process of finding her one. But she has no confidence in her husband so she finds another man to buy her one. That would be similar to what is happening here. The wife is going to be in debt to the man who purchased the car for her. There are going to be things she will need to compromise to live up to this arrangement.

Well if Judah makes an alliance with Assyria, there will be conditions. Judah will be giving up her independence. She will be accepting the control of another husband. She will be reliant upon another for her salvation.

So God is saying through Isaiah, don't do it. Don't do anything. Be careful about making any human arrangements at all to get yourself out of this mess. Why? Because the threat is not as much of a threat as it seems to be. God is saying, stop being moved like you are currently being moved by fear and faintheartedness. These two huge things in your path. They are like cigarette butts. They look menacing. They look like they will destroy you. But they will soon be nothing.

Then Isaiah tells them what these countries are saying and planning. **Sure**, they are planning to do exactly what Ahaz fears. But those are **man's plans**. We do better to find out **God's perspective** on the whole thing. And what is that? **thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass.**

Why is it that we find it so hard to reorient to the Word of the Lord? Why is it that we have such difficulty in just saying, OK. That is all I needed to know?

Isaiah is telling Ahaz that the thing he fears will not happen.

God even goes on to say- **Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken**

Wow. This perceived threat? All I need to do is wait and do nothing and it will no longer be a threat. Ahaz is even given a specific time when the threat will end.

Then Isaiah gets to the punch line. Ahaz has been given the facts. God has revealed **the facts** about his circumstances that are **more sure** than Ahaz's human evaluation of them. Now Ahaz gets to pick what he wants to believe. He can believe what he sees and thinks and reasons as his ultimate source of truth. Or He can trust **what God says** as his ultimate source of truth. But he ends by saying"

If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established."

This may be better understood, "You'll live by faith, or you won't live at all. Basically Isaiah is letting Ahaz know that how Ahaz responds to this challenge will determine Ahaz's destiny. If Ahaz chooses to trust God, Ahaz will be established. If he chooses not to trust God, his plans will fail and he will end up destroyed. But the choice is held out to Ahaz.

The word "if" is a human word. It is a word of options. It is a word of opportunities. And it has its chance for the danger of us choosing wrongly. God certainly is sovereign, but we live in the world of human choices that matter. We are confronted with "if"s often.

Ahaz is being challenged to place his faith in the Lord for the salvation of himself and his people. That is often the crisis we are in. We must choose. We must choose **who we will rely upon** for our help, for our salvation.

This is true for us in our choice to be right with God. We can try all kinds of paths of our own making that will **never get us right with God** because they do not do business with the debt of our sin. It is a debt that we cannot pay. It has earned a condemnation that we cannot get out of. The only thing we can do is call out to God and accept His way of getting right with Him. We must receive what He did on the cross to save us. We must, by faith, receive HIS way, His salvation, His path.

But as Christians we often have the same kinds of choices as Ahaz had about the dangers in our lives, those things that threaten to do us harm or to deprive us of what it is we think we want.

We can walk by faith, believing that God loves us and wants the best for us. So we do what He says gladly, knowing that it will lead to the best of all ends for us. We can know that we are making the choice that ultimately leads to our greatest happiness, even though it may take a while of trusting God without receiving the reward yet. We can believe what God says about our lives instead of believing the so called "truths" we can see with our eyes and imagine in our minds.

Or we can choose to trust our own resources. We can provide for ourselves in the strength of our flesh. We can follow our hearts in our pursuit of happiness. But if we do that, our lives will not be established. In fact, we will taste ruin until we surrender to God's rule in our lives.

Here is a quote from one of the commentaries about what faith is. Faith is the way Ahaz should have responded. Faith is the way we must respond.

[Isaiah 7:9b](#) makes faith in God the central, unavoidable question of our lives.

What is faith?

It has three components:

- 1 *Knowledge* of God,
- 2 persuading us to *agree* with God,
- 3 motivating us to *embrace* God.

John Murray, the Scottish theologian, defines faith as "a whole-souled movement of intelligent, consenting and confiding self-commitment....

Intellect, feeling and will converge upon Christ....

There is a consensus of all the functions of man's heart and mind." In other words, **faith is the God-awakened capacity to respond fully to Christ**. And if that is faith, then **unfaith** is the fragmentation and breakdown of our inner beings—intellect, feeling, and will.

We know that God is more real than the earthly things immediately before us.

We know he is more desirable than worldly attractions.

We know he is faithful.

We know we should live, not out of **what is**, but out of **what is promised**.

We know our hearts must be grounded in finality if we hope to go the distance.

And **to refuse what we ourselves know to be true** tears us apart inside. When we deny the truth we believe, and refuse the consent we desire, and withhold the trust we were created to enjoy, how can anything go right? The human being unravels. If we are not firm in faith, we are not firm at all. Everything in life, not just religion, flows out of our whole-souled movement toward Christ.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

So, what will it be for us?

How will we face threat of disaster?

How will we face it when that which we love most is in danger of being lost?

How will we face it when the troops are mustering over the border and it looks like a matter of time until we will be destroyed in one fashion or another?

This is real life. This is where our faith is either proven to be real or we prove ourselves to be self deceived.

We can show ourselves to either be like Isaiah or like Ahaz.

Who are we going to believe? What will we cling to for authority?

When fear knocks on our door, what are we going to turn to?

Ahaz went about checking his own provisions. He turned to things under his control. He trusted his own resources instead of God. How about us?

Who among us will respond to the threat by going to God's word to find out what He says about it? Who will go to it **needing to know only how God describes our situation** and what God wants us to do about it? Who of us will rejoice when we hear from the Lord because we then are set free to obey without concern for anything else?

Do you realize that Ahaz should have been rejoicing after Isaiah visited with him? Isaiah gave him an option from God for a wonderful ending. Isaiah told him essentially that he now had an option to stop worrying completely. He could stop preparing for the worst. He could know with certainty that God would be a better ally to Judah than any other possible alternative. He could have sternly rebuked the people as the godly leader that he should have been. He could have spent the time as troops swarmed at the border thanking and praising God for his provision. What a blessed time he could have had. How he could have been used of God. But Ahaz was too smart for that. Are we? Are we too smart to trust God? I don't really get it. Why don't we run to Him first? Why don't we enjoy his fellowship instead of fretting away our hours? Why can we be so stubborn when what God is offering us is only good? What is man that he is mindful of us? So what are your impending dangers this week? Where are the troops swarming at your borders? Who are you going to trust?