

Sermon Manuscript: Isaiah 7:1-17

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Main Idea (Point)

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When things are difficult and seem overwhelming, you can take God at his word, because he is with you.

Purpose

- the purpose of this talk is to call those who are seeing, or have seen, something that shakes their faith in God's promises to trust him, whether passively or actively

INTRO:

Have you ever sat in the middle of something that was supposed to go so well, only to find that it feels like it's completely fallen apart? Have you ever wondered where God was when things went wrong? Have you ever felt like you've tried to do everything God has said, only to end up in a place full of hurt? Today I want to talk about when everything is going wrong, when there seems to be no way out and it looks like God is going to lose. What happens when it looks like bad things are going to happen and we're powerless to stop them?

Normally, when we look to answer these kinds of questions, we look at places where people trusted God in a big way, and received an equally big answer. But today I want to talk about a time that isn't quite so cut and dried, a time when people didn't do everything the Lord was asking, and his word came to be anyway. If you have your Bibles or Bible apps, please open them to Isaiah 7:1-17. I'll be reading from the NIV today.

1 When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it.

2 Now the house of David was told, “Aram has allied itself with Ephraim”; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.

3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer’s Field.

4 Say to him, ‘Be careful, keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood—because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah.

5 Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah’s son have plotted your ruin, saying,

6 “Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it.”

7 Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “ ‘It will not take place, it will not happen,

8 for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.

9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah’s son. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.’ ”

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,

11 “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”

13 Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also?

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right,

16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

17 The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.”

1st movement

Now this is a long passage! And it has a lot of different parts, but I want to start with some background. Quick explanation. Ahaz is the king of Judah, and 2 Chron. 28 tells us that he had been in battle with both of these kings before, and it really didn't go well. So when he hears that they're coming for him and the people of Judah, he understandably freaks out. He feels surrounded by enemies. Even Israel seemed set against them. I'm sure Ahaz and the people of Judah felt like they were in a trap, and the walls were growing ever closer. Knowing this, God sends Isaiah with a message. He says, calm down! I've got this. God calls the two kings, the kings that are making all of Judah shake in their boots “burned out embers” (NLT) “Smoldering stubs” (NIV) and he gives a solid timeline for things falling apart for the kings. It's a long time! 65 years. I don't know about you, but if I were Ahaz, I might be discontent with or unsure about this timeline too. God knows this and calls for trust, calling Ahaz and the people of Judah to have firm faith and trust, so that God could help them to stand saying “if you do not stand firm in your

faith, you will not stand at all.” They’re not called to go out and do anything specific yet, just to stand firm in their faith, in their trust in God.

Sometimes, trusting in God is passive. We need to just sit back and wait and see God work for the good of the kingdom and those in it. People have told stories of times they trusted God and checks came in the mail out of nowhere. They’ve told stories of times they waited, and saw healing, they’ve told stories of waiting and seeing people come to faith that they never thought would. And maybe that’s where you are right now. You have to rely on the promises that God has given in the past, the eternal promises from his Word, things that are true, and unchanging, even if they don’t feel true in the moment. **Because God is eternal and unshakeable, so are his promises**, and sometimes we are simply called to just sit in that and trust.

When everything seems overwhelming, God is trustworthy, you can take him at his word.

But that’s hard to see when you’re in the middle of it, and God knows that too, so he offered Ahaz a sign. Because while sometimes trusting God involves just waiting, sometimes trusting in God is active, and requires action from us. In Ahaz’s case, both were true!

2nd movement

God tells Ahaz to ask for a sign to prove that his word was true. He calls for Ahaz to take action, to be a part of what God is doing. God told him that he could ask for anything “from the deepest depths to the highest heights!” But Ahaz refuses. He refuses in a way that’s meant to seem like he’s actively putting his faith in God, not testing him, simply sitting back and, at least on the surface, trusting God. But in doing so he is directly disobeying something God has told him to do. The Scripture doesn’t tell us explicitly why, but we see this same thing play out time and

time again in Scripture and in life, both ours and the people around us. Why? Why when God tells us to ask do we refuse?

For me, when this happened, it came down to trust. A few years back, I was working an 8-5, and teaching music on the side. I wanted to make the transition to just teaching music, but I wasn't sure what God wanted me to do. I prayed over and over again, telling God I just wanted to be where he wanted me, and if he would just show me where to go and what to do, I would do it. Time and time again, I heard him say, just make a decision. Any decision. And time and time again, I went back and asked but *which* decision? The Lord was looking for my active trust, for me to trust that no matter which way the job situation turned out, he would take care of me. And I almost missed out. I heard the Lord, but I didn't want to do what he said because I wanted to be in line with what he wanted, when what he wanted was simply for me to take action. What if I asked and it didn't come through? What if I was supposed to ask for something specific and asked for the wrong thing? Better to be faux-pious and say I won't test God. Finally I basically threw up my hands and made a decision. That was 6 months before the pandemic started, and if I hadn't made a decision then, I likely would have been in a very shaky situation job-wise, possibly laid off, without enough time to build up my studio beforehand. I didn't know what was coming at the time, but God did. My active participation in trusting God was required. I needed to **take God at his word. His word is unshakeable and trustworthy, even in a shaky world.**

3rd movement

Does the fact that God's word is unshakeable and trustworthy mean that everything is going to work out exactly like we hope, or that bad things aren't going to happen? No! This passage isn't God saying that everything is always going to be fine. This isn't God saying that bad things don't happen. In fact, at the end, God tells them that Assyria will be their downfall. God gave a sign, and yet Judah still fell. Judah fell and was in exile for 70 years. I'm sure that a lot of the people felt that God's promise was ended, that everything was over, and they (and maybe even God) had lost. And yet God's word was still true, and is still true. God's word was still unshakable, and is still unshakeable. God's promises came to pass, and will come to pass. See here's where we get to that part of the passage that everybody loves to quote. "A Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, God with us." God's ultimate promise to his people. It took longer than maybe anyone who heard this prophecy originally wanted. It came after what looked like the end of God's people. It looked different than the people seeking the Lord's help at Jesus' time wanted. And yet it was so much greater than anything they could have hoped for. The Lord never promised us a life free from trouble and pain, bad things happen, sometimes life seems absolutely awful. And yet, God is faithful. **Jesus' time on earth, his birth, life, death, and resurrection is the ultimate proof that God is faithful. God was with us, and God is with us. When things seem absolutely overwhelming, take God at his word.**

Conclusion

How? Some of you have been going and doing while God has been asking you to sit still, listen to him, and trust that he has everything in hand for the good of his kingdom. I urge you to sit in the presence of the good God, whose word never fails, and take him at it. Some of you have been frozen, wanting to trust God, but not sure how, when he is simply calling for you to make a

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move, take a step, ask a question. Maybe the action is simply to lay out how you're feeling to God, openly and honestly.

So can you and I trust that, despite what looks to be invincible odds, despite what looks to be overwhelming circumstances, God's word is true? Yes. And for me, that's huge. Life is sometimes difficult and confusing. Things don't always make sense. And yet God is eternal, his Word always true, his promises always kept. **When things are difficult and seem overwhelming, you can take God at his word, because he, the eternal, unshakable, almighty God is with you.**