

(The Word for Today) Isaiah 31:1 - Part 1

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in the Lord, not in the flesh, and seeking His deliverance in times of trouble.

Duration: 25:59

Scripture: Exodus 14:14, 2 Chronicles 16:9, Psalm 20:7, Psalm 33:16-17, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 31:1, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith discusses the situation in which the people of Jerusalem find themselves. The Assyrian army, known for their cruelty, is conquering cities and moving towards Jerusalem. The people are fearful, as no city has been able to withstand the Assyrian forces. However, God reassures Pastor Chuck that He will provide for them and deliver them from their enemies. Pastor Chuck shares a personal story of a man who wanted to donate a large sum of money to the church, but God instructed him to refuse it, as He wanted to show His provision and receive all the glory for the work being done.

Transcript

Welcome to The Word for Today. The Word for Today is a continuous study of the Bible, taught by Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. Pastor Chuck is currently teaching from the Old Testament, and if you're following along in your Bible, we'll be continuing today in Isaiah chapter 31, beginning with verse 1, as we continue with an in-depth message. And now with today's study, here's Pastor Chuck.

The situation is this. Assyria has a conquering army that has conquered the Northern Kingdom and is now moving toward Jerusalem, conquering all of the cities in the path. Those that are in Jerusalem are fearful, because no city has been able to stand against the forces of Assyria.

The Assyrians are very cruel. They are inhumane. They are known to mutilate their captives physically, gouging out an eye, cutting off an ear, cutting off the nose, cutting out tongues.

And thus, those in Jerusalem are fearful. Egypt has a powerful army. It has probably more chariots, which in those days were sort of the tanks of their warfare.

They have more chariots than any army, and they have a very powerful and numerous cavalry units. And so, the logical strategy at this point would be to try to hire the Egyptians to come and to help in this impending struggle against the Assyrians. And yet the Prophet Isaiah is counseling King Hezekiah to just trust in the Lord, that the Lord will deliver him from the Assyrians.

It is true that God always wants to work in behalf of His people and for His people. If you are a child of God, God will defend you. God will take care of you.

He wants to defend you and take care of you. And He wants to do it in such a way that it will be quite obvious that only God could have delivered you, so that when the deliverance come, only God can receive the glory. And God loves to set His people free.

God loves to work in behalf of His people to show Himself strong in their behalf, that they might rejoice in Him and praise Him for His help, for His strength, and for His victory. Years ago, when Calvary Chapel was at sort of a crisis period, we had been worshiping in the little church that is no longer there on the next corner that we had built. We had been worshiping in it for two years.

We had gone to triple services. We had doubled the capacity of the auditorium, and we were setting up 500 chairs out in the patio. And we knew that the facility was no longer adequate.

We had to get something larger. And the opportunity came up to buy this property here, one half of it, the southern half of this property. And so, we entered into escrow.

It was a giant step of faith, and the Lord had to comfort me many times, as I would begin to panic over the thought of the development of this property, the cost and all. About that time, a romaine said to me, there's a man here that wants to talk to you about some money that he wants to donate. And so, I sat down with this man, and he said, about 10 years ago, I set aside a portfolio, and I said, Lord, that's your money.

I'm going to just invest it for you. And however it develops, it's your portfolio, it's your money. And he said, it has grown so large, I'm sort of fearful of it now, and so the time has come, I want to give it away.

And he said, I've been observing what the Lord is doing here and the young people and all, and I'm impressed in this work. And so, I am interested in perhaps giving it to you. He said, it's a little over a million dollars.

Naturally, it was an exciting kind of a thing, in that we were looking ahead to some pretty heavy expenditures. But I said, you know, that is a lot of money, and I can understand you're being afraid of it. I think I would be too.

So let me pray and seek the Lord on this. And so, I went home and I spent a lot of time in prayer, and the Lord spoke to my heart and told me to refuse the money, not to take it. For the Lord said, I am doing a work.

I have provided up till now, I will continue to provide. And the work that I am doing is an amazement to the world. And if you will just trust in me, I will continue to supply.

There will never be a lack of funds. If you receive this man's money in years to come, when I have done my work and people look at the work that I have done, they will always say, but don't you know a very wealthy man gave them over a million dollars? And the glory will be going to this man, and not to me. And

I want to do a work for which I will receive the glory.

And if you refuse it, I will do my work. The man came the next morning with his checkbook. And I said, I don't think you're going to understand this, but I cannot receive your money.

And I gave him the reason why, and suggested other places where he might invest it for the Lord. And the Lord was faithful and is faithful. And the Lord has done a work, a marvelous work.

And we have never lacked funds for the work of God. When we finished this building, it was totally paid for. We didn't owe a dime.

The church doesn't owe a dime. God has continued to bless in marvelous ways. And in such ways that only He can receive the glory.

Now, I said all of that as a prelude to the opening verse of chapter 31, where as they were considering going down to Egypt, they were going to send their ambassadors and emissaries down to Egypt to hire the Egyptians to come and to help them in the battle against the Assyrians. The prophet Isaiah said, woe to them that go down to Egypt for help and trust on horses and in chariots, because they are many. And the horsemen, because they are very strong.

But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, and neither seek the Lord. Now in the scripture, Egypt is always a type of the flesh. And the warning here is against trusting in the arm of flesh.

The exhortation is to trust in the Lord. Woe unto them who trust in the flesh, who go down to Egypt to seek their help, because they have a lot of chariots. And they have a lot of horsemen, which were powerful weapons in warfare in those days.

People who would rely upon the strength of the flesh, rather than upon the Lord. And so we are constantly being exhorted in the scriptures to put our trust in the Lord. It's better to trust in the Lord than to have confidence in man.

We sing that song, the arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own. And so the prophet is pronouncing this woe, because they are going down to make this league with Egypt, in order to solicit their help against the Assyrians. Verse 2 is speaking of God, yet He also is wise.

God is wise. You can trust in the counsel of God. He will bring evil, and will not call back His words, but will arise against the house of evildoers, and against the help of those that work iniquity.

If you go down for Egypt to help, evil will come of it. They will not be a help to you. You rely upon the flesh, it will fail you.

It's evil. They are evil people. Do not look to them for your help, or for your strength, but look to the Lord.

For the Egyptians are men, and not God. Their horses are flesh, and not spirit. So you're going to be relying upon man, rather than relying upon God.

You're going to be relying upon flesh, rather than upon the Spirit. And when the Lord stretches out His hand, both he that helps shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down, and they shall all fail together. If you trust in the flesh, it's going to fail you, and you will fail with it.

Put your confidence in the flesh, it's going to let you down. It'll fall, and you will fall with it. And so this very poignant warning by God against this alliance that would bring to them that trust in the flesh.

Now, they didn't listen. They did go down to Egypt. They took money out of the treasury, and they hired the Egyptians to come and help them.

But the Assyrians went down and wiped out the Egyptian army, and then came back and continued their siege of Jerusalem. The Egyptians did not help. The arm of flesh failed them.

For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like is a lion, and the young lion roaring on his prey, with a multitude of shepherds, who are called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them. So shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. And so the first figure of God is like a lion that has, say, taken and pounced on one of the sheep from the shepherd's fold.

And the shepherds gather together with their sticks, and they come yelling, waving the sticks at the lion, and throwing rocks. But he just, the lion stands there on the prey, not leaving the prey, but just standing there and disregarding all of the noise that the shepherds are making as they're trying to frighten him off. He's got his prey.

He's going to keep it. And so the Lord of hosts will come down and fight for Mount Zion like a lion, a young lion. Roaring on his prey, the multitude of shepherds may make a lot of noise, but they will not frighten the lion off.

He'll come down to fight for Mount Zion and for the hill thereof. And as birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it.

Now, this is an interesting prophecy, and it just seems to be put in here, but the allegory is a little difficult, perhaps, to understand. But there was a very interesting thing that took place in 1917 in Jerusalem. It was towards the end of World War I, and the Turks were occupying at that time the land of Palestine, and the Turks were occupying the city of Jerusalem.

And General Allenby had come with the British forces, and he was taking the promised land, and he was driving out the Turks, and he had come to Jerusalem, and was setting up his siege against the city of Jerusalem. But being a Christian, it hurt him to think of firing the artillery into the city and all to drive the Turks out. But yet it was necessary to take the city of Jerusalem.

But he didn't want to just destroy indiscriminately. And so he sent some observation planes flying over the city of Jerusalem, and all there was was the old city at that time within the walls. And the Mea Shurim, the quarters that the Jews had built just outside.

He sent these reconnaissance planes over Jerusalem in order to spot the encampments of the Turks within, in order that he could direct the fire of the artillery and keep the damage to a minimum. However, when these reconnaissance planes were flying over, the Turks felt that they were perhaps going to be dropping bombs on them. And so in the night, the Turks fled from Jerusalem.

And he was able to take Jerusalem without firing a shot and without destroying the city. The city was completely preserved. And in light of that, the scripture becomes very interesting.

As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending also, he will deliver it. And passing over, he will preserve it.

And the city of Jerusalem was preserved as a result of these observation planes frightening the Turks and causing them to leave the city without a fight. Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. Now, this is quite an indictment against Israel.

Turn again actually to God. They had revolted against God. They had revolted against the word of God.

God had said, trust me. I will deliver you. Don't go down to Egypt.

Don't trust the Egyptians. Don't trust their army. Don't trust in their chariots.

Trust me. And their refusal to trust God, their insistence on this alliance with Egypt is a revolting against the commandment of God. And so the exhortation of the prophet is turned back to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

For in that day, every man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for his sin. When you see the work of God, when you see the deliverance of God, then you will forsake your idols that you have made. Now, it is true that the Egyptians did not help.

It is also true that when the Egyptian army was defeated and they realized there could be no help, they did turn to the Lord. They did seek the Lord. There was a revival.

There was a putting away of their idols, even as Isaiah predicted here. And God miraculously delivered them from the Assyrians. God wiped out the Assyrian army.

We'll get that in a few more chapters, 37, 38. And we will also see the effect of the sinners in Zion when they saw what God's presence did to the Assyrians. Great fear came upon the sinners in Zion when they saw God's devouring fire as it destroyed the Assyrian armies.

So, the prophecy of their getting rid of their idols that they had made, their idols of silver and gold. Unfortunately, as time went on, they went back to their idols. They returned to their idolatry and ultimately their idolatry was their ruin.

Face to face, Lord let me know. Face to face, Lord let me see You. Pastor Chuck Smith will return with a few closing comments.

But first, I'd like to remind you that today's message is available in its unedited form on cassette or CD. Simply write or call and ask for ordering details on tape or CD number C3256. Again, that's tape or CD number C3256.

Well, Christmas time is soon approaching and it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season. Buying presents, decorating, cooking, the list grows longer every day. Without realizing it, we can easily forget the true meaning of why we celebrate our Lord's birth.

For this reason, the word for today would like to present a booklet by Pastor Chuck Smith entitled, How Can a Man Be Born Again? And also an audio CD entitled, Why? by Pastor Chuck that would be the perfect complement for Christmas cards and gifts this year. Both resources share the gospel of Jesus Christ and explain the true meaning of Christmas and why a man born 2,000 years ago can still affect the

world today. And best of all, they contain a message leading people to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

And remember, the word for today would like to assist you this Christmas in spreading the gospel of Jesus to your family, friends, and coworkers. Please call our customer service department to help you in finding that perfect gift that will reflect the true meaning of Christmas. And if you call right now and mention this radio ad, the word for today will give you a 20% discount on any resource carried by the word for today.

So call the word for today at 1-800-272-WORD or write to us at P.O. Box 8000, Costa Mesa, California 92628. Once again, that number to call is 1-800-272-9673. And for those of you that would like to visit our website, you can do so at www.twft.com. Or if you would like to email us, you can do so at info@twft.com. Well, coming up next time on the word for today, Pastor Chuck will be continuing his fascinating study through the book of Isaiah.

That's coming up next time on the word for today. And now with a few closing comments, here's Pastor Chuck. Time has come.

Got to call upon God. But I don't know if God's going to just really thrash me now because man, I knew better. I knew better.

He wants to show His grace. He doesn't want to thrash you. He wants to display His mercy.

He'll retreat into that exalted position of the sovereign God. I will have mercy upon Him. I will have mercy.

And some of you have come to the place where you're waiting on God. Oh, it still looks bad. You still don't know the way out, but you know that God is the only way.

And you just have strength because of the confidence that you have in God. Your soul is waiting on Him. That you'll never make a mistake when you commit your ways fully to the Lord and trust in Him to deliver you.

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