

God Saves
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Isaiah 31:1-9

Opening: Let's take a quick poll about children of all ages. When your kids had a problem, from a toddler's "boo boos" to a teenager's broken hearts or broken arms, which parent did they run to first, Mom or Dad?

- Who's your first phone call in a crisis?
- When an enemy is bearing down on you where do you turn for protection?

Big Idea: Most people believe, "*When you have nowhere else to turn, turn to God.*" When a follower of Christ is in crisis or under attack, our Heavenly Father shouldn't be our last resort; He should be the first place we run.

Before the text, some context:

- The people of Judah were again under attack; the enemy was Assyria.
- Fearing the attack, King Hezekiah was seeking a military alliance to protect Judah. He turned to the "world power" of that day: Egypt.
- Much like an abused spouse that returns to the abuser, the Israelites were placing their faith in Egypt, forgetting what the Egyptians did to their people 500 years before.
- They planned to turn to Egypt instead of trusting God to protect them.
- If this sounds familiar, it's similar to our study of King Ahaz in Isaiah 7.
- Humanly speaking, why wouldn't this small nation seek military help?
- Turning to evil human beings instead of their Heavenly Father was basically confirming their belief that God wasn't able to protect them.

- It was also a violation of God's command in Deuteronomy 17:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.'

- Here is what God said in Isaiah 30:1-5 about Judah's plan: Isaiah 30:1-5 (NLT)

¹ "What sorrow awaits my rebellious children," says the Lord. "You make plans that are contrary to mine. You make alliances not directed by my Spirit, thus piling up your sins. ² For without consulting me, you have gone down to Egypt for help. You have put your trust in Pharaoh's protection. You have tried to hide in his shade. ³ But by trusting Pharaoh, you will be humiliated, and by depending on him, you will be disgraced. ⁴ For though his power extends to Zoan and his officials have arrived in Hanes, ⁵ all who trust in him will be ashamed. He will not help you. Instead, he will disgrace you."

Now, let's look at today's text in Isaiah 31. God sent Isaiah with this message:

Isaiah 31:1-9 (NLT)

¹ What sorrow awaits those who look to Egypt for help, trusting their horses, chariots, and charioteers and depending on the strength of human armies instead of looking to the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.

- Truth: Trusting in human resources instead of God leads to sorrow.
- In fairness, Egypt's military might would have been impressive.
- The people of Judah were foot soldiers. Horses were rare and chariots almost non-existent in Jerusalem. Egypt had both and lots of them.
- Trusting in human resources is a natural temptation, but Christ-followers are to "walk by faith, not by sight."ⁱ God's track record of protection should be assurance enough that we can trust Him to protect us.
- Judah kept getting this wrong, so God (in wisdom) threatened tough love.

² In his wisdom, the Lord will send great disaster; he will not change his mind. He will rise against the wicked and against their helpers. ³

For these Egyptians are mere humans, not God! Their horses are puny flesh, not mighty spirits! When the Lord raises his fist against them, those who help will stumble, and those being helped will fall. They will all fall down and die together.

- Key sentence: they will all (Egypt and Judah) fall and die together.
- Though it seems harsh, God said if they trusted Egypt instead of Him, He would bring disaster on them (the wicked) and their helpers (Egypt.)
- Did God call His own children “wicked” and threaten them with calamity?
- Remember what James said in his New Testament letter? James 4:4 (ESV) ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- Our lesson writer: *“Their betrayal (trusting the Egyptians rather than the Lord) put them squarely in the category of the enemies of God.”ⁱ*
- God is a just God and though His warning of judgment seems harsh, God can’t ignore sin. Trusting in human resources instead of God is sin.
- Verses four and five are more reassuring! God protects His children.

⁴ But this is what the Lord has told me: “When a strong young lion stands growling over a sheep it has killed, it is not frightened by the shouts and noise of a whole crowd of shepherds. In the same way, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will come down and fight on Mount Zion.

⁵ The Lord of Heaven’s Armies will hover over Jerusalem and protect it like a bird protecting its nest. He will defend and save the city; he will pass over it and rescue it.”

- Using two similies (a lion of justice and a protective mama bird) God reassured His people (and us) He has the power to protect us and His power is stronger than any enemy. God is not afraid of our enemies.

- Common sense tells us you don't get between a mama bear and her cubs or a mama bird and her chicks. God will protect His children from attack.
- Is physical protection in every situation a promise?
- We'll look at that momentarily. Back to the Judeans. How could they avoid the sin of trusting in humans? As with all sin, the key word is "turn."

⁶ Though you are such wicked rebels, my people, come and return to the Lord. ⁷ I know the glorious day will come when each of you will throw away the gold idols and silver images your sinful hands have made.

- Trusting in the world to protect us instead of trusting in God is essentially idolatry. Our lesson writer: *"At its core, idolatry is any effort to control the uncontrollable. The temptation in the garden of Eden was to become enough like God and Adam and Eve could have control and be independent of Him."*ⁱⁱⁱ Instead of playing God we need to trust Him!
- When we fall into the trap of trusting in ourselves or other humans for protection, the solution is to "turn" back to God and repent of that sin.
- The good news: King Hezekiah came to his senses, abandoned his plan to sell out to Egypt, and prayed to God for protection. (See 2 Kings 19)
- Before we get to the application, what happened to those marauding, invading Assyrians that were threatening Judah? God zapped them!
- Isaiah had prophesied:

⁸ "The Assyrians will be destroyed, but not by the swords of men. The sword of God will strike them, and they will panic and flee. The strong young Assyrians will be taken away as captives. ⁹ Even the strongest will quake with terror, and princes will flee when they see your battle flags," says the Lord, whose fire burns in Zion, whose flame blazes from Jerusalem.

- The fulfillment of that prophecy is recorded in 2 Kings 19:35: ³⁵ And that night the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose

early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. (Who needs Egypt when you have the Lord?)

- The Judeans learned what we need to learn: God has the power to protect us from every enemy, and human resources can't compare to His power.
- Wait a minute. What about those who have been martyred and other tragic deaths of faithful followers of Christ? Where was God's protection?
- It's a fair and challenging question that points us to God's Sovereignty.
- One commentator explains: *"The Old Covenant was very much concerned with earthly blessings, and physical protection was among them. Throughout the Old Testament, we see God protecting His people in order to bring His plans to pass (e.g., [Exodus 1:22—2:10](#); [1 Kings 17:1–6](#); [Jonah 1](#)). It is important to understand that we are under the New Covenant, not the Old. God does not promise to keep believers in Christ from all physical harm. There are certainly times when He does mercifully shield us from situations where we would sustain injury or loss. Paul and Luke's survival of the shipwreck in Acts 27 and Paul's imperviousness to the snakebite in Acts 28 are cases in point. Today, however, God's promises to believers usually refer to spiritual protection."*^{iv}
- We human beings prefer "happy endings" to every situation in life.
- God promises followers of Christ the ultimate happy ending that never ends: eternal life with Christ after we leave this world. Faith in Him means we trust His perfect will even if it doesn't make earthly sense to us.
- Charles Spurgeon: *"God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart."*^v
- The point is, God has the power to protect us from every enemy and human resources can't compare to that power. We need to trust Him.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We would all agree there are lots of “enemies” attacking us in 2020. If ever we needed to know our trust source for protection it is this crazy year!
- When a follower of Christ is in crisis or under attack, our Heavenly Father shouldn’t be our last resort; He should be the first place we run.
- Let me illustrate the way this should work with the logic of a two-year-old.
- Our grandson Knox knows where to run when he’s in trouble. [Illustration]
- A two-year old gets it. When they’re playing and don’t want it to end they push Mom and Dad away, but in a crisis they naturally run TO Mom and Dad. I pray we will teach Knox how that works with our Heavenly Father.
- When we hear the story of Judah’s plan to turn to the military might of Egypt we’re reminded of Psalm 20:7 (ESV) ⁷ Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.
- Can we say that consistently? When we’re under attack do we trust in the “chariots and horses” of human resources or do we trust in the Creator of the Universe? If we’ve trusted Christ as Savior, our Heavenly Father shouldn’t be our last resort in crisis; He should be the first place we run.

ⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (2 Co 5:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱ Explore the Bible Leaders Guide – Lifeway 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} <https://www.gotquestions.org/protection-of-God.html>

^v <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1403154-god-is-too-good-to-be-unkind-and-he-is>