

2 KINGS 19 : 10-12, 15, 19, 35 STAND FIRM !

¹⁰ [Sennacherib said,] *Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: "Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, 'Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'*

¹¹ *Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered? ¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed?"*...

¹⁵ *Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: "O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. . . . ¹⁹ Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his [Sennacherib's] hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone."* . . .

³⁵ *And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.*

Do you remember God's words to Job after He had allowed Job to lose all earthly things—flocks, herds, servants, children, health? Job complained that God was being unfair. But God said, "Prepare yourself like a man! I will question you, and you shall answer!" God gave him example after example of how he was inferior to the LORD. . . Job, duly humbled, said, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3). To stand against God is useless; to stand with God is key. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (6:11). Stand firm in Him!

In our text, Judah and Jerusalem were under siege from the armies of Sennacherib, mighty King of the Assyrian Empire. King Hezekiah of Jerusalem was faithful to the God of Promise. Hezekiah had destroyed countless idol altars. He would not budge nor surrender the city of Jerusalem, the city of God and God's temple, to Sennacherib. He trusted that the Lord would help. Sennacherib sent his Commander or Rabshakeh to Jerusalem to end the siege quickly, by "getting into their heads" and demoralizing King Hezekiah and God's people. Rabshakeh said, in summary, "Surrender! and we will be nice to you. Do not listen to Hezekiah. Look what we did to mighty Egypt. Remember how Hezekiah has torn down all God's altars across your land! [*Wrong. It was idol altars*], and do you think your God will help you now? Your God sent me against you! Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, saying the Lord will deliver you." Hezekiah heard all these words, and the people heard them also. Hezekiah did not answer Rabshakeh and told the people not to answer either. Hezekiah would stand strong in the Lord. He humbled himself before God; he tore his robes, put on sackcloth—rough cloth, like burlap sacks. He went to the house of the Lord for prayer. You? Whenever you need help—which is every day—go to the Lord your Savior humbly—like Peter who fell on his knees before Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Hezekiah said "LORD" [all capitals], that is "Jehovah." Jehovah means "He Is," or "I Am." The LORD is the eternal One who does all. He created, because He wanted to. He acts with mercy, because He wants to—not because He "has to." Hezekiah specifically acknowledged the LORD as the God of mercy and forgiveness; he addressed God as "*the One who dwells between the cherubim.*" The word cherubim is the Hebrew word for "angels." In English we sometimes say "cherubs" for angels. Hezekiah was referring to the two angel/cherubim images made of gold located on the Ark (box) of the Covenant (agreement or promise). Inside the Ark were the Ten Commandments, written on stone tablets. The cover, on which the cherubim stood, was called the Atonement Cover or the Mercy Seat. Once a year the blood of a sacrificed spotless male lamb was sprinkled on the Atonement Cover to make satisfaction / atonement / payment for the sins of all Israel—in addition to all the other sacrifices. This blood foreshadowed the blood of the Lamb, Jesus, in whom was mercy and forgiveness forever. Hezekiah humbly and confidently prayed to the Lord of mercy, who dwelt between the cherubim. ----- And you also in your daily troubles, go to the Lord of mercy and forgiveness in Jesus. Humbly seek His forgiveness and His wise and loving aid. He spared not His own eternal Son—His Son!—in order to spare you. He can do anything. Stand firm in Him.

Today on Reformation Sunday, we think back 500 years to Martin Luther of Germany. In April of 1521—when he was 34 years old—Martin Luther, a professor, in fact a "doctor," of theology (Bible

studies) at Wittenberg, Germany, was in a tight spot. He had been born the son of a copper miner, did well at school, went to the university of Erfurt to study law, quit to become a penniless monk in the Roman Catholic church (the only church in Europe). He sought peace for his sins. Even there he did not find it. From a monk, he became a priest, still no peace. From priest he was advanced to Bible professor, at Wittenberg. He even earned the title “Doctor.” However, he still did not know how to settle accounts with God for sins. As he studied the Bible for his lectures, he learned that Jesus, God’s eternal Son had cleared his record for him. Jesus, true God, became Jesus also true man and sacrificed His blood in death on the cross for us. That same Jesus rose from death to life, in victory, on Easter. The sentence against Luther’s sin had been paid in full by Jesus. By faith in Him Luther was safe and at peace. In Jesus, you also are safe, declared acceptable to God, holy, forgiven. This is what Luther had been seeking. In 1517, he was already convinced from the Bible that forgiveness could not be bought. On October 31, 1517, Luther posted 95 Statements (Theses) on the church door (bulletin board), seeking scholars to debate him on the value of buying “leniency papers” (indulgences) from the Church of Rome for sins. That is what we celebrate today—the events of October 31, 1517. History calls it the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation of the Church. Luther continued to grow in his understanding of the Bible and boldly said so in opposition the Roman Catholic Church—because the Bible said so. And so 3½ years later, in 1521, he stood in a tight spot. He was summoned before the highest temporal ruler at the time, Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire—consisting of Austria, Italy, Switzerland Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain. Charles V was loyal to the papacy. He wanted to settle the “bickering” in the church in his empire. He called for a “diet,” a meeting, at the city Worms (“worms”), Germany. There he would seek for Luther to take back, recant, all his volatile writings, against the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. If not, Luther would be declared an outlaw throughout the empire, wanted dead or alive. Luther, like Hezekiah, trusted in the Lord of mercy, Jesus. He prayed earnestly the night before his answer—meaning life or death for him. He treasured the Truth that stood in God’s Word, and the peace of forgiveness in Jesus. He trusted that the Lord would deal with his foes spouting their lies from Satan—attacking the church of Christ, as they denied faith in Christ alone as the only avenue for forgiveness, the only resurrection from the grave to eternal life in heaven. He would stand firm.

The next day he gave his answer. “Unless I am convinced by sound reason and Scripture, I cannot and will not recant! Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.” In simple faith, he took a firm stand against his enemies. In simple faith, King Hezekiah had asked God the same. Do you? When you are in trouble, in a tight spot, take it all to the Lord and trust Him for His help. There is your forgiveness in Jesus, there is your daily life in His Kingdom, there—in Jesus—you have life after death. Stand strong!

The Lord helped King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. ³⁵ *The angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.* Imagine 185,000 dead! What a rescue! Likewise for Luther. He did not recant and was declared an outlaw wanted dead or alive, yet God miraculously spared him. The princes of Germany who were Lutheran, would not hand Luther over to the Emperor. The Emperor did not oppose them, because needed their help against the invading Turks. When outlaw edict, the Edict of Worms, was published against Luther, it was never enforced. Martin Luther lived another 25 years, freely proclaiming the Bible truths of salvation in Jesus by faith alone.

The devil today still likes to twist, distort, stomp, the message of Jesus the crucified and risen Savior, Son of God and Son of Man! Stand strong in the Lord on what the Bible says. It’s easy to be soft, so as to fit in. It’s easy to avoid standing for Scripture, lest there be repercussions. It’s never right to join hands in promoting a false message, whether large or a small, against the Bible. Obviously, it is not acceptable to compromise with those deny Christ as the only Savior. But the same with “smaller” untruths. E.g., Does man by his own reason and strength make the a “decision” to believe in Christ? NO. “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Ghost” (I Corinthians 12:3). Will believers rule with Christ for 1000 years on this earth, before the end? No. “My Kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:30). Has God chosen some for hell no matter what? No. “God our Savior will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)). Etc. The devil seeks for you to compromise and give ground on Bible teaching, so as to diminish Christ. Stand firm!

Amen! So be it!

---Pastor Kanzenbach