Just Waiting For You To Ask

*Isaiah 30:18* And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

- In the stillness of the night,
  - in the dark moonless hours
    - shrouded in utmost secrecy
  - a diplomatic mission
    - raced through the cool night air.
- They were men on a mission.
  - They were sent as envoys
    - from King Hezekiah of Judah to Egypt.
- Hezekiah was a good man
  - who inherited a kingdom from his father, Ahaz,
    - that was already under
      - the heavy and oppressive thumb
        - of the Assyrians.
  - He inherited a strong empire
    - and, in his early years,
      - through a series of reforms
        - he strengthened the kingdom.
    - However, at the same time
      - that he was strengthening his kingdom,
        - Assyria was reaching the historical apex
          - of its world dominion.
    - For over 200 years Judah and Israel
      - had existed side by side,
        - sister nations with a common past.
    - However, now Isreal has fallen to Assyria,
      - along with Samaria,
        - and the Philistines.
- Judah is surrounded on three sides
  - by the mighty Assyrian empire
    - and the only nation state,
      - with any semblance of strength,
        - that remains free from the Assyrians is Egypt.
- For the first decade of Hezekiah’s reign
  - he maintains the peace with Assyria,
    - not participating in several revolts that take place
      - as neighboring nations seek to escape
        - the overbearing regime of Assyria.
• However, after 10 long years
  o of existing as nothing less than a puppet king,
    ▪ a vassal of Assyria,
  o Hezekiah sees his chance to break free
    ▪ when Assyria’s ruler dies
      • precipitating a change of regime.
• This is the occasion that gives rise
  o to our nighttime envoy
    ▪ that rides swiftly to Egypt
      • with an offer of a alliance.
• Hezekiah has imagined that,
  o perhaps, if Judah and Egypt
    ▪ were to combine their armies
      • and launch a revolt against Assyria,
  o especially in this moment
    ▪ of political upheaval,
      • they may be able to
        o establish their independence
          ▪ once and for all.
• It is a solid plan,
  o with sound military strategy behind it.
• However, with all that Hezekiah
  o has taken into account
    ▪ concerning the political ramifications
      • and the military requirements,
    ▪ there is one thing
      • that he hasn’t considered.
• The mighty Assyrian army
  o may rule in its arrogance and pride,
    ▪ but those heathen people
      • are the vassals of a greater king.
• God has employed the Assyrians
  o to render his judgment
    ▪ on his rebellious children.
• Hezekiah doesn’t realize it,
  o nor do his envoys,
    ▪ but the deal that they are
      • about to strike, in secret,
        o is destined to fail
          ▪ in full sight of the whole world.
• As a matter of fact,
  o the very deal that was struck
    ▪ between Egypt and Judah

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• is symptomatic of the situation
  o that has caused God
    ▪ to empower the Assyrians
  • and use them
    o to chastise his people.

• Indeed, instead of turning to the Lord for help,
  o instead of seeking the guidance
    ▪ of the prophet of the Lord,
      • Hezekiah has sough the counsel
        o of his military advisors
          ▪ and his multitude of statesmen,
        • men skilled in war and politics
          ▪ but not in tune
            o with the will and purpose of God.

• Make no mistake about it,
  o the problem is not that Judah
    ▪ wants to escape the oppressive
      • Assyrian regime.

• The problem is that,
  o instead of turning to God for help,
    ▪ they sought an alliance with Egypt.

• They began to put their trust
  o in Egypt’s horses,
    ▪ chariots a
    ▪ nd men,
  • in a time when they should have
    o put their trust in God.

• What Hezekiah failed to understand
  o was that God was in charge
    ▪ of the whole situation,
      • not the Assyrians
        o and certainly not the Egyptians.

• If he was going to turn anywhere for help,
  o he should have turned himself a
    ▪ nd his nation towards God
      • and sough the help of the Lord.
  o However, in failing to do that,
    ▪ Hezekiah sealed his own doom.

• Out text, tonight, comes from
  o a portion of the book of Isaiah
    ▪ where the old prophet publicly denounces
      • the treaty that has been struck in secret.
• Can you imagine Hezekiah’s surprise,
  o when that which was done
    ▪ under cover of darkness
    ▪ and concealed as a matter
      o of national security,
    ▪ was shouted in the streets
    ▪ by the prophet of the Lord.
  o It was an alliance
    ▪ that would not be publicized
      ▪ until the crucial moment
        ▪ that they rose up together,
          o in arms,
        ▪ against the Assyrians,
       ▪ an alliance that no one
          o was supposed to know about,
    o but Isaiah has heard from God
      ▪ and God is aware
        ▪ of the deals that are struck
          o in the darkness of the night.
• So Isaiah begins to denounce the treaty
  o and condemn Judah.
    ▪ Hezekiah doesn’t realize it yet,
      ▪ but this hasty alliance
        o is about to bring him,
          ▪ and his nation
            ▪ to utter ruin
        o because he put his trust
          ▪ in the Egyptians,
            ▪ instead of in the Lord.
• Isaiah began to denounce this strategy
  o in the strongest possible terms.
    ▪ This is what he said:

Isaiah 30:1-5 MEV
1 Woe to the rebellious children, says the Lord, who take counsel, but not from Me, and make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, in order to add sin to sin;
2 they walk down to Egypt and have not asked from My mouth, to strengthen themselves in the safety of Pharaoh and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

• The prophet announces lamentation
  o over the rebellious attitude
    ▪ that has caused his covenant children
      ▪ to act independently

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o and contrary to his plans.

• It is not that they have sought
  o an escape from the Assyrians
    ▪ but that they have demonstrated
      • their disrespect for God
        o “by making a plan”
          ▪ that had no connection to His will.

• They already had an alliance with God,
  o they didn’t need an alliance with Egypt.
    ▪ If only they would put their faith in God,
      • He would provide for them.
        o He would take care of them.

• But instead they made an alliance with Egypt
  o without ever stopping to ask
    ▪ if this was the will of God,
      • they never considered
        o if God’s spirit was in this.

• The prophet regarded
  o this act of rebellion as sin.
    ▪ In fact, he said that they heaped
      • sin on top of sin.
  o In a later passage, Isaiah explains
    ▪ the very thought process
      • of Hezekiah and his advisors.

*Isaiah 31:1 MEV*

1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel nor seek the Lord!

• They were looking for a military advantage.
  o They wanted the Egyptian cavalry and chariots
    ▪ to protect them from the Assyrian infantry.

• Horses were superior
  o because they were much faster
    ▪ than the infantry
      • and could disrupt a charge
        o of ground troops.
  o They could speedily inflict damage
    ▪ and then escape to safer ground.

• By making this alliance with Egypt,
  o the princes of Judah
    ▪ were in essence relying
      • on horses to save them,
But what they failed to recognize was that the soldiers with the longest spears, the most horses, or the best chariots do not determine the outcome of the battle.

It is God who determines and directs the course of history, not men.

The prophet goes on:

**Isaiah 31:3 MEV**

3 Now the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he who helps shall fall and he who is helped shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

The Egyptians will fail because men are just men, and the horses are simply horses. They are flesh and not spirit.

God is spirit. He is in charge of everything. His powerful hand controls the destiny of the nations, all nations, including Judah, Egypt and Assyria.

The only true source of help must come from God, from spirit, not from flesh.

But, because they have sought the help of horses and chariots, they will all fail. Both the helper and those being helped will utterly fail because that’s what happens when you rely on the strength of mankind instead of the Lord.

**Isaiah 30:3 MEV**

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3 Therefore the safety of Pharaoh shall be your shame and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your humiliation.

- The prophet says,
  - this is a worthless plan.
    - What you thought was safety,
      - what you thought was a sure thing,
        - will become your shame.
  - This alliance will bring
    - great embarrassment to the nation.
      - All their plans will go awry
        - and Judah will be humiliated
          - instead of helped.
  - Egypt will be of no help to them.
    - As matter of fact,
      - when they prepare to face
        - the might of the Assyrians,
      - the Egyptians will shrink back in fear
        - and refuse to even join the battle.
  - Isaiah’s warning was absolutely clear.
    - Their action opposed God’s will
      - and would lead to utter failure.
  - Now the prophet tells them
    - that God had a plan
      - for dealing with the Assyrians:

*Isaiah 30:15-16 MEV*

15 For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. Yet you were not willing,
16 and you said, “No, for we will flee on horses”; therefore you shall flee. “And we will ride on swift horses”; therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.

- God’s plan for dealing with the Assyrian crisis
  - is for the people of Judah
    - to “turn and rest”
      - which is another way of saying
        - turn and repent.
- If they would only
  - turn their heart back to God,
    - and put their trust in him,
      - he would give them rest.
- But they were not willing
  - to trust God with their lives.
This is the crux of the whole issue,
  • this is the heart of the matter.
  • It was easier to trust Egypt;
    • it was easier to trust chariots and horses,
      • than to put their trust
        • in the Almighty God.
  • Instead they said, No!
    • We will flee on horses,
      • meaning that if the enemy
        • arises against them
          • they will flee to Egypt.
    • But this, too is doomed for failure
      • for, though they ride swift horses,
        • their enemy will be even swifter.

  • This will be their fate:

  **Isaiah 30:17 MEV**
  17 One thousand shall flee at the threat of one man; at the threat of five you shall flee
  until you are left as a flag on the top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill.

  • Since the nation did not trust God,
    • they will face utter defeat.
  • The imagery of a flag on a hill
    • is a sign of a great military defeat for Judah,
      • for all that will be left of Judah
        • will be one measly flagpole or banner on a hill.
  • This warning prophetically pictures
    • the defeat of Judah’s military,
      • the loss of almost all its territory
        • except one small hill.
    • This will come to pass,
      • exactly as prophesied,
        • when the Assyrians defeat
          • all the fortified towns in Judah
            • except the city of Jerusalem.
        • They will be that lonely flag
          • On top of that solitary hill.
  • Isaiah’s words present a challenge
    • that many believers will face
      • in their walk with God.
    • What do you do
      • when you are faced with impossible odds,
• with an enemy that is certain to destroy you?
  o Where do you turn?
    ▪ Should you rest in the confidence
      • that God is taking care of you?
    ▪ Should you calmly trust
      • God’s strength and deliverance
        o in a time of difficulty
          ▪ against insurmountable odds,
      ▪ or should you do
        • everything humanly possible
          o to secure your own victory
            ▪ though your own strength,
              • or perhaps even
                o with the help of others?

• And here’s the point:
  o God’s way is the way of trust.
    ▪ God’s way calls for you
      • to rest in the confidence
        o that he is the one
          ▪ in charge of your life.
    o Anything less than complete
      ▪ and total trust in him
        • will ultimately bring failure,
          o destruction
          o and death.

• The next verse is the key verse of the whole chapter:
  o Because of their rebellion,
    ▪ because they have already decided
      • to go another way,
    ▪ because they are set
      • on putting their trust
        o in the Egyptians,
          ▪ God says:

  **Isaiah 30:18** And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

• Therefore, the Lord will wait...
  o What a tragic statement.
    ▪ The Lord,
    ▪ the maker of heaven and earth,
    ▪ the Ancient of Days,
    ▪ the One who is mighty in battle,

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he who has never been defeated,
  • says I will wait…
  o I could come to your defense.
    • I could deliver you from your enemy.
      • I could break the strong hold
        o of the oppressor.
          • But I will wait…
  o I don’t believe that there is
    • a more tragic phrase
      • to be found in all of scripture...
        o I would.
        o I could.
        o I am well able.
        o But I will wait on you
          • until you are finally ready
            • to wait on me!
  o My mercy is rich,
    • my grace is abundant,
      • my strength is more than enough.
    • I have exactly what you need.
      • There is rest in my presence,
        o refreshing in my spirit,
          • and victory in my shadow,
            • but I will wait…

• Somebody in this house, tonight,
  o needs to grasp
    • the tragedy of those words.
  o Calamity has come upon you,
    • your enemy is pressing in on every side,
      • sickness,
      • disease,
      • famine,
      • financial ruin,
        o all of it is arrayed against you
          • and you have chosen
            • to go it alone.
  o You have sought
    • an alliance with the flesh
      • instead of the spirit.
  o You have relied on your own strength,
    • in your own checkbook,
      • in your limited abilities
    • and, though you’ve done your best
• to hold it all together,
  o though you’ve tried your hardest
    ▪ to reason it all out,
    o everything is falling apart.
  o Your whole life
    ▪ is slipping through your hands
    ▪ like so many grains of sand.
• Where is God in all of this?
  o I can tell you where he is.
    ▪ He’s right here... waiting.
      • Just waiting for you to ask.
      • Just waiting for you to call on him.
      • Just waiting for you to finally
        o turn and put your trust in him.
  o Listen to what I’m telling you.
    o God wants only the best for you
      ▪ but the best can never come
        • until you put your trust in him.
    o So, though it may break his heart,
      ▪ though he may mourn your choices,
        • mark my words,
          o he will wait...
    o He will not step in
      ▪ until he is invited in.
        • He will not intervene
          o until you finally turn your heart to him.
  o Oh, he is more than able.
    ▪ His resources are greater
      • than your greatest need.
  o But he will not force his help on you.
    ▪ And he will not be anything less
      • than completely and totally in charge.
• As long as your trust
  o is in horses and chariots,
    ▪ as long as your confidence
      • is in flesh and blood,
        o the Lord will wait...
• But when you turn your heart to him,
  o when you lift up your voice
    ▪ and call upon him,
      • listen to what he promises.
        o The very next verse:

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Isaiah 30:19-20 MEV

19 O people in Zion, inhabitants in Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry. When He hears it, He will answer you.
20 Though the Lord has given you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet He, your Teacher, will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.

- Weeping will end.
  - God will be gracious.
    - When he hears the sound of your cry.
    - When he hears your call for help.
- Listen, all of heaven is there,
  - just waiting for you to ask!
    - When you finally see the hopelessness
      - of trusting in your own efforts
        - and finally look to God
          - for a solution to your problems,
            - he will answer you.
  - He will wait no more!
    - His mercy and grace
      - will replace the
        - “bread of adversity”
          - and “water of affliction”.
- These two phrases are unique,
  - for they take the symbols of sustenance,
    - bread and water,
      - and cast them
        - as adversity and affliction.
  - It’s the Lord’s way of saying
    - that just because you have
      - plenty of material wealth,
    - just because you have bread and water,
      - that doesn’t mean that you are living
        - in the blessings of God.
  - Sometimes bread
    - becomes the bread of adversity
      - and sometimes water
        - becomes the water of affliction
    - but if you will turn
      - your heart to God,
        - if you will seek his face,
          - he will no longer hide himself.
  - Your eyes will see him,
    - you will see his hand
      - at work in your life
and you will partake of the wonderful provision of the Lord.

- Listen to what he promised:

**Isaiah 30:21 MEV**

21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left.

- This is what God said.
  - When you stop trying to fight your own battles
    - and put your trust in me,
  - all of a sudden
    - you are going to hear my voice as I direct your footsteps.

- I will say,
  - this is the way, walk in it.
  - And if you venture to the right hand,
    - you will hear my voice correct your path.
  - If you wander off to the left,
    - you will hear me again, this is the way,
      - walk in it.

- This is what happens
  - when you put your trust in the Lord, instead of all
    - of your plans and devices.

**Close**

- Picture it if you can, I was a big brother once.
  - And my little brother had a mouth on him.

- He would pick a fight
  - with the biggest bully on the street,
    - then come running back to the house
      - and hide behind me,
        - because I was as big as the bully.

- So I can relate to the story
  - of the little brother who picked a fight that he could not win.

- He came racing home,
  - just as his adversary caught up with him.

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There was his brother,
  - standing in the yard,
    - bigger and stronger
      - than the old bully.

Relief flooded over him.
  - He would be safe now!
    - Only that’s not exactly how it played out.

The bully caught little Johnny by the arm
  - and began to pound him into the ground.
    - Johnny was doing all he could
      - to deflect the blows
        - when he looked over
          - and saw his brother
            - sitting idly by the side.

At first he thought,
  - that’s all right,
    - I’ll show him.
      - And with grim determination
        - he began to fight back.

But his resolve was quickly broken
  - as his much larger opponent
    - overwhelmed him.

Finally, in desperation
  - he cried out for his brother’s help
    - and, in one moment,
      - it was all over.
  - With one mighty swing
    - the brother defeated the bully,
      - laid him out in the dirt
        - with a busted nose.

As little Johnny picked himself up
  - and began to tend to his scrapes and bruises
    - he couldn’t help but ask his brother,
      - what in the world were you waiting for.

His older brother
  - just cocked his head to one side,
    - stuck his thumbs in his suspenders
      - and replied, “I was just waiting for you to ask.”

It’s a funny story,
  - but it conveys a sad reality.

I can think of nothing as tragic, this evening,
  - as the image of God standing by,
    - as this world beats you down,
• waiting for you
  o to invite him into the fight!

• I want you to understand something tonight.
  o You’re not waiting on God.
    ▪ He’s waiting on you!
  o The problem is not that God
    ▪ doesn’t want to meet your need;
      • the problem is that you have
        o more faith in your own ability
          ▪ to meet your needs
        • than you have in God.
  o As long as that’s the case,
    ▪ God will wait...
      • But I come to tell someone in this house
        o that he is ready to act,
        o he is ready to step in,
        o he is ready to bring deliverance,
          ▪ he’s just waiting for you to ask!