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The Lord will be Gracious

Donald Roth

Dordt College, donald.roth@dordt.edu

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The Lord will be Gracious

Abstract

"Our trials may be significant, but our passage today reminds us that we serve a God who will surely deliver us."

Posting about quiet trust in our Savior from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/the-lord-will-be-gracious/>

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Donald Roth

December 2,
2016

Daily Scripture Readings

[Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19](#)

[Isaiah 30:19-26](#)

[Acts 13:16-25](#)

I love the prophets. Many other books of the Bible appeal to me on a more accessible level, but the work of the prophets are books that really come to life the more you dig into them. They're rich in imagery and deeply connected to the lifecycle of God's covenant with His people, especially His covenant suit against them, and this makes them deeply rooted in their historical setting. Yet they have a constant forward-looking posture that makes them applicable today, especially when read in the light of their context. We can see all of these aspects on display in today's reading, and we can draw on these aspects to find both great comfort and challenge in its message.

Context

This passage is an interlude from Isaiah 30, which condemns Judah for looking to Egypt rather than God to deliver them from the oppression of Assyria. Imagine the pain that this betrayal caused the Lord, who built His covenant with His people on delivering them from Egypt! Ultimately, this reliance on Egypt would lead King Hezekiah to rebel against Assyria and provoke an invasion which would culminate in the siege of Jerusalem.¹

However, just as the Lord delivered His people before, so He promises that the Assyrians serve His purifying purposes and that He will ultimately deliver His people from their enemies. This invasion is one of discipline, not destruction. Our passage picks up in verse 19 of the book, as Isaiah's prophetic vision shifts to the eternal. While the prophecy reflects aspects of the deliverance that was immediately in Judah's future, the real vision stretches to the coming of the Messiah and beyond.

Comfort

The comfort in this passage is deep and apparent. Despite the coming trial, God will see to it that His people endure, and He promises to deliver them when they cry out to Him. However, God promises more. Israel is defined by stubbornness (its very name means "struggles with God"), yet God promised that He would one day [circumcise the hearts of His people](#), that He would [replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh](#), or—as we see here—that He would give them ears to hear and eyes to see. Even more, this blessing would come with a Teacher who they could see and who would guide them in the way they walked. This statement prophesies not only the coming of Christ, but also the blessing of the Holy Spirit promised by Christ as a helper and guide for His people.²

Isaiah's vision doesn't stop there; it slips further into the future, looking to the consummation of the Lord's deliverance, painting a picture of abundance, peace, and restoration set against "the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." The banishing of darkness in verse 26 conjures up comparisons to the New Jerusalem in Revelation, and with this we can see the greatest comfort of the gospel: God delivers His people from adversity to abundance, from strife to [shalom](#). Even the chaos and destruction of the Last Day will be a sweet thing for God's people.

Challenge

While it's reaffirming to see the Lord's hand in the fulfillment of messianic prophesies, and it's comforting to rest in this proven trustworthiness as we look to the coming fulfillment of God's promises, we should find significant

challenge in this passage, too.

Looking to the context from a historical perspective, we know the foolishness and offensiveness of Judah's decision to depend on Egypt, a military force that spent much of the Old Testament past its imperial prime. However, we, too, regularly look to the means of the world for our deliverance. How often do we heed the world's call to put our faith in political power, wealth, or our own ingenuity, after which we wage culture wars, preach a gospel of wealth, or cling to the myth of pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps? How often do we, too, put our faith in Egypt or idols, forsaking the Lord?

Instead, this passage calls us to patience and the quiet kind of trust that learns through adversity to cling ever more tightly to our Savior. This is not to deny that it is a terrifying thing to stare down a ravaging Assyrian horde. Put on Judah's shoes: they were systematically crippled, hemmed in at every side, and forced to even strip ornaments from the temple to slow their oppressor, yet Isaiah says in verse 18, "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him." How difficult must that message have been, and how difficult is it to hear the same in our lives? Our trials may be significant, but our passage today reminds us that we serve a God who will surely deliver us. Father, grant us the patience to trust in that deliverance.

Footnotes

1. Dating these verses, together with the clear references of the surrounding chapters, suggests that this prophecy concerns the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib around 701 BC. See [II Kings 18-19](#). ↩
2. See, e.g., [John 16](#). ↩