

Three Questions Isa. 36:1-2

Introduction:

1. There are three fundamental questions that we all ask in our relationships. Whether it is in our marriage, our relationship with our parents, our relationship with our friends, OR our relationship with our God, the same three questions are critical.
2. The first, "Can I count on you?"
3. The second, "Will you respond to me, when I call on you?"
4. The third, "Do I matter to you?"
5. These are matters of loyalty, faithfulness and commitment. But more than anything they are questions about vulnerability and trust, the corner stone of all committed relationships.

Discussion:

- I. While these questions are always important to us, they are especially critical in a time of crisis, and King Hezekiah faced a crisis.
 - A. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had already attacked and defeated the fortified cities of Judah.
 1. The great fortified city of Lachish had already fallen.
 2. Sennacherib had sent Rabshakeh, his commander, from Lachish to Jerusalem, with a large army.
 3. He met with representatives from Hezekiah's court: Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah.
 - B. Rabshakeh questioned the reliability of those Hezekiah was counting on (4-10).
 1. Hezekiah had allied with Egypt. Rabshakeh said, "You can't count on them."
 2. Hezekiah trusted in the Lord God. Rabshakeh said, "Hezekiah has torn down the altars and has restricted worship to Jerusalem." He views this in his heathen way. Hezekiah had done a good thing (2 Kings 18:4). But Rabshakeh is saying, "You can't count on Him. He even says, "The Lord told me to go up against your land and destroy it."
 3. Rabshakeh knew that Hezekiah was asking this important question of the Lord. Lord, can I count on you? Can I depend on you? Are you there for me?
 - C. Rabshakeh questioned the reliability of those the people were counting on (11-20).
 1. They were counting on Hezekiah. Rabshakeh said, "Hezekiah will not be able to deliver you."
 2. They were counting on God. Rabshakeh said, "Beware, Hezekiah is misleading you, saying, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?" See verses 18-20.
 - D. We ask these questions when we find ourselves in a crisis. "Can I count on you? Can I depend on you? Are you there for me?"
 1. We ask this question of our spouse. We ask it of our parents. We ask it of our friends. We ask it of the Lord.
 2. We ask it in times of sickness, in times of death, in times of financial collapse, in times of emotional distress, in times of temptation and sin.
 3. We need reassurance.

- a. We reach out to our spouse. Sometimes they are reassuring and sometimes not. Job reached out to his wife and she said, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" (2:9).
 - b. We reach out to our friends. Sometimes they are reassuring and sometimes not. Job reached out to his friends and they said, "If you were righteous your suffering would be ended."
4. The situation was so severe that Eliakim, Shebna and Joah came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn. When Hezekiah heard their words he tore his clothes.

II. Hezekiah sought the Lord's help.

- A. He went into the house of the Lord with his clothes torn and covered in sackcloth.
- B. He sent Eliakim, Shebna and Joah to Isaiah, the prophet.
 1. Hezekiah said, "This is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. Perhaps the Lord your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left."
 2. Hezekiah is asking, "Lord, will you respond to me when I call on You?"
- C. We are asking that question too aren't we?
 1. We are asking our spouse, "Will you respond to me when I call on you?"
 2. Young children are asking their parents, "Will you respond to me when I call on you?"
 3. Aging parents are asking their children, "Will you respond to me when I call on you?"
 4. Friends are asking one another, "Will you respond to me when I call on you?"
 5. Christians are asking their shepherds, "Will you respond to me when I call on you?"
- D. The Lord spoke through Isaiah to king Hezekiah. "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land" (37:6-7).
 1. What was God's answer to the question, "Lord, will you respond to me when I call on You?"
 2. "Do not be afraid. I am responding!"
 3. Rabshakeh learned that the Assyrians were fighting in Libnah and that Tirhakah, king of Cush had come out to fight them and so he withdrew from Jerusalem, but not without a threat (37:8-13).

III. Hezekiah took the threat to God and prayed (37:14-20).

- A. Hezekiah's prayer is a prayer of faith and confidence in God to deliver them. Yet, underlying this prayer is the question, "Lord, do we really matter to You?"
 1. Hezekiah's prayer acknowledges the God of Israel as the only God, the living God.

2. The people's of the nations did not really matter to their gods, for they were the works of their own hands, useless entities of wood and stone.
 3. But Israel was God's chosen people. They really mattered to Him.
- B. This is the question that marriage partners are asking one another. "Do I really matter to You?" It is the question that children are asking parents, that parents are asking children. It is the question that friends are asking one another. "Do I really matter to you?" It is the question that Christians are asking of their shepherds. "Do I really matter to you?" We all need affirmation from those that we love that we really matter to them, and especially is this true in a time of great difficulty.
- C. God responded to Hezekiah through Isaiah the prophet (37:21-35).
1. Yes, Israel really matters to the Lord.
 2. He will defend Jerusalem and save it.
 3. The king of Assyrian will turn away.
- D. The angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians (37:36-38). Sennacherib returned to Ninevah and was later killed by his sons.

IV. What does all this mean?

- A. First and foremost it means that we can count on the Lord. We can depend on Him. He is there for us.
1. Paul asked this rhetorical question in Rom. 8:31, "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"
 2. It means that the Lord has responded to us when we have called to Him out of our distress associated with sin and its consequences. It means that you matter to the Lord, that He values and accepts you.
 3. Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"
- B. Second it means that in our relationships with others we should follow His example. We should be those who can be counted on by our spouse, by our children, by our parents, by our friends, by other Christians.
1. We should respond to them when they call on us.
 2. We should be looking for ways to communicate to them that they matter to us, that we value and accept them.

Conclusion:

1. Isn't this the message of the cross? The message is that we can count on the Lord. We can depend on Him. He is there for us. He has responded to us. He does respond to us when we call on Him. We do matter to Him. He values and accepts us. Will you place your trust in Him?

2. To be sure, in our human relationships, no one can be depended on 100%. We won't always respond to one another perfectly. We won't always communicate value and acceptance. But we can repair our relationships by being gracious and by forgiving one another and by affirming our commitment to be more like the Lord.