

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 18, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, so we're diving into a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt, and he's going through Isaiah chapters 36 and 37. Oh, wow. Isaiah, okay.

Yeah. And he's already laid a lot of groundwork in earlier lectures, so we're kind of jumping into the middle of things here. Okay, cool.

But basically, we're looking at this idea of like, how do you trust God when things are really, really scary? Yeah. Which I think we've all had to deal with in different ways in our lives. Oh, for sure.

And Dr. Oswalt starts off with this fascinating detail. The Assyrian officer, who's giving this terrifying message, is standing in the exact same spot where 35 years earlier, the prophet Isaiah challenged King Ahaz to trust God. Like history repeating itself.

Yeah, giant cosmic echo or something. So then we have this Rabshakeh guy. Yeah, the Assyrian officer.

Who's like the ultimate bad cop. Right. And his speech is full of threats, but the weird thing is, how much he uses the word trust.

Uh-huh. It's like nine times he uses the word trust or some form of it. It's a classic manipulation tactic, you know.

Yeah, when you repeat a word like that over and over and over again, you're trying to get that idea into people's minds. Like a jingle or something. Okay.

Wow. So he's saying like, don't trust Egypt, don't trust your army, and definitely don't trust Yahweh. Right.

He's kind of mocking them, it seems like. Yeah, he is. And he's giving these really clever arguments.

For example, he points out that Hezekiah destroyed the high places of worship. Okay, so for us, that might not seem like a big deal. Right.

But back then, those high places were where people would go to offer sacrifices to God. It was a common practice. But wasn't Hezekiah actually trying to centralize worship in the temple in Jerusalem? Yes, you're exactly right.

Hezekiah was trying to follow God's instructions to have one central place of worship. So this Rabshakeh guy is twisting things around. He is.

He's using Hezekiah's faithfulness against him. Exactly. Wow.

Sneaky. Yeah. And you know what? He even says that no other God has been able to save their people from the mighty Assyrian army.

Uh-huh. So why should Yahweh be any different? Like he's got a scorecard or something. He does.

He's like, look, I've defeated all these other gods; yours is just next on the list. And then he's like, hey, but if you surrender, I'll give you 2,000 horses and a life of luxury. Yeah.

Right. What a deal. It's like a used car salesman.

You know. Okay. So how does Hezekiah react to all of this? Well, instead of freaking out or giving in, he does something really interesting.

Okay. He humbles himself. Uh-huh.

Goes to the temple. Okay. And sends for Isaiah, the prophet.

It's like a three-step plan for crisis management. It is. Okay.

Humble yourself, seek guidance, and reach out for help. Reach out to your trusted advisor. Exactly.

Exactly. And in his prayer, he uses this really powerful image. This day is a day of distress.

Children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. Wow. That's a really vivid image.

Right. It's like being trapped. Yeah.

And you can't escape. You're helpless..

But you know, it's interesting. At first, Hezekiah asks Isaiah to pray to the Lord your God, but later he refers to God as my God. Hmm.

I wonder what that shift means. Yeah. Is it like he's claiming ownership of his faith? Maybe in that moment of crisis.

Could be. He's really making it personal. Yeah.

Okay. So what does Isaiah say? Well, Isaiah gives him this message from God. Okay.

Basically, don't be afraid. I've got this. Okay.

God assures Hezekiah that he will deal with Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, and will even cause him to be killed by a sword in his own land. Oh, wow. And you know what? It actually happened 19 years later while Sennacherib was worshiping in his temple.

Talk about poetic justice. Right. So, wait a minute.

But then Sennacherib sends Hezekiah this letter, right? He does. And he's basically saying the same thing. Like, hey, I've defeated all these other gods.

What makes you think yours is any different? Yep. Still trying to psych him out. Yeah.

Playing mind games. Yeah. But Hezekiah doesn't fall for it.

What does he do? He takes the letter straight to the temple. Okay. And spreads it out before God.

He's like, okay, God. You see what's going on here? Yeah. Right.

Over to you. Exactly. And his prayer is powerful.

Yeah. He calls God Yahweh three times. Oh, wow.

Emphasizing God's absolute power and authority. Okay. Not his own merit.

So, he's really focusing on who God is. He is the creator of heaven and earth. And here's the really crazy part.

Hezekiah is not just praying for himself or even for the people of Judah. Right. He's praying that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, oh Lord, are God alone.

He's thinking bigger. Wow. It's about God's reputation.

Yeah. Revealing God's power to the entire world. And what happens? Because God answers that prayer in a big way.

Wow. The very next line in the text is so stark. And the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.

Wow. 185,000. That's just mind-blowing.

It is. What do you think that must have been like for the survivors? Oh, man. I can't even imagine waking up and finding all your comrades so many people.

It's more than terrifying. Absolutely terrifying. But what's interesting is that Sennacherib's own records, his official annals, confirm that he never actually attacked Jerusalem.

Why? Instead, he claims to have shut Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage. But he doesn't mention the 185,000 dead. Nope.

It's like he's trying to save face, make himself look good, even though- this huge defeat. Yeah. It's a reminder that history is often written by the victors.

It makes you wonder why he would leave that part out. Right. Maybe it was just too embarrassing.

Probably. And you know what? After that, Sennacherib never campaigned in the West again. Really? It's like he hit a wall and decided to turn back.

So where does this leave us? Well, Dr. Oswalt says this really intriguing thing. He says, yes, you can trust God, but- and then what? That's it. He leaves us hanging.

Ugh. Talk about a cliffhanger. Right.

We'll have to wait for the next part of our deep dive to find out what that but is all about. Okay. So that but is still hanging out there like, yes, you can trust God, but- Right.

What's the catch? What's the catch? Well, it's not so much a catch as like a deeper layer to this whole trust thing. Okay. Dr. Oswalt's saying that trusting God doesn't mean life's going to be easy.

Right. Sometimes it means facing some really tough situations and making some hard choices. So what happens next in this story? We left off with Hezekiah, you know, celebrating this victory over the Assyrians.

Right. But then bam, Hezekiah gets sick, like really sick, deathbed sick. And Isaiah comes to him with this message like, get your affairs in order, dude.

You're not going to make it. Talk about a mood swing. That'll come out, right? From national hero to facing your own mortality.

It's heavy stuff. And it's interesting how Hezekiah responds. He doesn't just give up, you know; he turns to the wall, and he prays.

And he reminds God of his faithfulness. You know, he's like, hey, remember how I've always been there for you? Okay. But is he just trying to stay alive? I think it's deeper than that.

He's got this deep desire to keep serving God, to fulfill his purpose. He even says, remember, oh Lord, I beseech you, how I've walked before you in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight. So he's appealing to God's sense of justice, reminding him of his track record.

He's like, look, I've been a good servant. Don't cut me off now. I still have work to do.

Okay. Yeah. And God listens.

He does. Before Isaiah even leaves the courtyard, he gets another message from God. What's it say? Hezekiah's life is going to be extended by 15 years.

15 years. Wow. And as a bonus, God reaffirms his promise to protect Jerusalem.

Wow. Another miracle. Right.

But what's this I hear about a sundial? Oh yeah. God gives Hezekiah a sign to confirm the miracle. He makes the shadow on the sundial go backward.

Backwards. Yeah. 10 steps.

What? That's messing with time. Right? Like God's saying, look, I can do anything. I'm in control here.

That's powerful. So Hezekiah recovers, gets 15 more years. Jerusalem is safe.

Happy ending. Right? You'd think so. But remember Dr. Oswalt's, but... Oh yeah.

There's got to be a but. There is. Okay.

Spill it. It comes in the form of a new challenge. Okay.

One that reveals a crack in Hezekiah's armor, so to speak. Oh no. What happens? These envoys from Babylon come to visit Hezekiah.

Babylon? Yeah. A rising power in the east. Okay.

Supposedly, they're there to congratulate him on his recovery. Right. But Hezekiah wants to impress them.

Uh-oh. He shows them all his treasures, his silver, his gold, his armory, a whole shebang. Why would he do that? Well, Dr. Oswalt suggests that Hezekiah is blinded by pride.

Yeah. He wants to show off. To these Babylonians? Yeah.

That seems risky. It is. I bet this doesn't end well.

You're right. It doesn't. After the envoys leave, Isaiah shows up.

Oh boy. With a prophecy that must have felt like a punch in the gut. What does he say? All that stuff.

Hezekiah just showed off all the gold and silver. It's all going to be carried off to Babylon. Oh no.

And even worse, some of Hezekiah's descendants will become eunuchs in the Babylonian palace. What? That's terrible. It's a harsh reality check.

So what does Hezekiah say? His response is kind of strange. He says, Wait. He's okay with this.

It's a weird reaction, right? Yeah. His family being taken captive. His treasures looted.

It doesn't make sense. Scholars have debated what it means for centuries. What are some of the theories? Some say it's resignation, like After Me the Deluge kind of thing.

So as long as he's alright, who cares what happens next? That's one way to see it. What's another way? Maybe he's clinging to a sliver of hope that at least he'll be spared the worst of it. So maybe a mix of self-preservation and short-sightedness.

Possibly. But that doesn't sound like the Hezekiah who trusted God to save him from the Assyrians. It does raise questions about his faith, doesn't it? Yeah, it does.

And it shows the danger of pride and misplaced trust. So what's the big takeaway from this whole Babylonian episode? I think Dr. Oswalt's using it to show us the tension between trust and human weakness. We can trust in God, but that doesn't mean we won't make bad choices.

Right. And those choices can have serious consequences. Not just for ourselves, but for others too.

Exactly. It's a reminder that even the most faithful among us can stumble. Yeah.

And those stumbles can have ripple effects. So it's a call for humility. It is.

We need to be honest about our own weaknesses. Our tendency to get distracted. Yeah, by shiny objects, you know.

Yeah. And our need for God's guidance. All the time.

So trusting God is more than just a one-time decision. Right. It's a process.

Of realignment. Yeah, a daily choice to let go of our ego and embrace humility. But it's not about being passive.

No. It's about recognizing our limits. And aligning ourselves with God's will.

So we're putting in the effort. Yeah. But we're also relying on God's grace.

To catch us when we fall. Like learning to ride a bike. Exactly.

You got to pedal. You got to steer. But you also got to trust that the bike will stay upright.

Right. And if you fall, you can get back up and try again. So trusting God doesn't mean we'll never have problems.

No, it doesn't. But it does mean we're not alone. You got it.

And Dr. Oswalt sums it up beautifully. He says, Trust in God is not a guarantee of an easy life, but it is a guarantee that we won't face life alone. That's a good one.

It is. It really is. It gives us the courage to face our own Assyrian armies.

Yeah. Our own challenges and fears. Yeah.

Wow, this is getting really deep. It is. We're going to need a moment to process all of this.

Yeah. We'll be right back with the final part of our deep dive. Where we'll unpack Dr. Oswalt's concluding thoughts.

Yeah. And the key takeaways from this incredible story. All right.

So we're back. And I'm still thinking about Hezekiah. You know? Yeah.

He starts out so strong. Trusting God to rescue him from the Assyrians. Right.

But then he totally messes up when those Babylonian envoys show up. Yeah. It's like he gets distracted by all the attention and forgets what really matters.

Yeah. Forgets who he's really accountable to in the end. And that's what makes this story so powerful, right? It's something we can all relate to.

Yeah. Totally. I mean, we all have those moments where we get caught up in appearances, you know? Right.

Or let our ego get the best of us. For sure. Hezekiah's story shows us that even the most faithful people are still human.

Right. We all make mistakes. So how do we deal with that? Yeah.

How do we trust God when we know we're going to mess up? Exactly. That's the big question, isn't it? It is. And I think Dr. Oswalt gives us some good answers in his conclusion.

Okay. What does he say? He reminds us that these chapters in Isaiah aren't just some ancient history lesson. Yeah.

They're about this ongoing struggle between human pride and God's grace. It's like a tug of war. It is.

Between wanting to be in control and needing to surrender to something bigger than ourselves. Exactly. We tend to put our trust in all the wrong things.

Like what? Our possessions, our achievements, what other people think of us. Yeah. All that stuff.

But God keeps inviting us back, you know? Back to what? Back to a relationship of trust with him. Where we admit we need him. Right.

And rely on his power, not our own. So it's not a one-time decision. No.

It's a constant process. Of what? Of realignment. Realignment with God.

Exactly. A daily choice to let go of our ego and embrace humility. But it's not about being passive, is it? No.

Not at all. It's about recognizing our limits and working with God. So we're doing our part.

Yeah. But we're also relying on God's grace. To pick us up when we fall.

It's like learning to ride a bike, you said before. It is. You've got to pedal.

You got to steer. But you also got to trust that the bike will stay up. And if you fall, you get back up and try again.

Exactly. So trusting God doesn't mean we'll never have problems. But it does mean we're not alone.

You got it. And Dr. Oswalt says it perfectly. Trust in God is not a guarantee of an easy life.

But it is a guarantee that we won't face life alone. Wow. That's really powerful.

It is. It means that no matter what we go through, God is with us. Yeah.

Offering us grace and guidance every step of the way. So we can face our challenges with courage and hope. Even our own Assyrian armies.

I like that. Yeah. So I think we've come to the end of this deep dive.

And wow, I've learned a lot about trust. Me too. It's more than just a concept.

It's a relationship. Yeah. A relationship that takes work and humility and a willingness to let go of our own way of thinking.

And as we go through life, let's remember we don't have to do it alone. Yeah. We have a God who sees us, hears us, and loves us unconditionally.

That's the good news. It is. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive, everyone.

See you next time. For another exciting journey into knowledge and ideas.