

# Isaiah 33:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

## Analysis

**Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail**, ניטשו חבלין בל-פְּרָשׁוּ נֵס (nitteshu chavalayikh bal-yechazzequ-khen tornam bal-parsesu nes)—your ropes (חבל, chevel) are loosened (natash), they can't strengthen (חזק, chazaq) the mast (תְּרִין, toren), can't spread (פְּרָשׁ, paras) the sail (נֵס, nes). **Then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey**, אז חלָק עד שָׁלָל מִרְבָּה פְּסָחִים בָּזָז בָּז (az chullaq ad shalal marbeh pischim bazzu vaz)—even פְּסָחִים (pisseach, lame) plunder (בָּזָז, bazaz) the spoil (שָׁלָל, shalal).

This addresses Assyria (or any enemy) in defeat—their ship disabled, ropes loose, mast unsecured, sail unspreadable. The nautical metaphor depicts complete incapacitation. Then even the lame can plunder them—those normally disadvantaged in battle easily overcome the paralyzed enemy. This fulfills verse 4's locust imagery. God so thoroughly defeats enemies that the weakest Judeans can gather spoils. David, before fighting Goliath, declared: 'the battle is the LORD's' (1 Samuel 17:47). When God fights, even the weak triumph.

## Historical Context

Though Assyria was a land power, nautical imagery depicts their helplessness. Ancient ships with loosened rigging were uncontrollable—dead in water, unable to escape or fight. Assyria's mighty army, reduced to corpses (Isaiah 37:36), became

helpless prey. The 'lame' plundering them shows complete reversal—normally excluded from warfare (2 Samuel 5:8), now even they participate in victory spoils. God's deliverance is so complete it includes the marginalized.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does God sometimes disable enemies so thoroughly that even the weak can overcome them?
2. What 'loose tacklings'—areas of incapacity and failure—characterize those who oppose God?
3. When have you, in weakness, experienced victory because God fought for you?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	בְּלִיאָה	נָטָשׁ	בְּלִיאָה	כִּי	בְּלִיאָה	כִּי	בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם
are loosed	Thy tacklings	H1077	strengthen	they could not well	H3653	their mast	H1077				
H5203	H2256		H2388		H3653	H8650					
פְּרָנָם	בְּלִיאָה	נָטָשׁ	כִּי	בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	מְרַבָּה	שָׁלֵל	מְרַבָּה	שָׁלֵל
they could not spread	the sail	H227	divided	then is the prey	H5706	spoil	H4766	H7998	H4766	H7998	H4766
H6566	H5251		H2505		H5706						
בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	נָטָשׁ	כִּי	בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	בְּלִיאָה	פְּרָנָם	מְרַבָּה	שָׁלֵל	מְרַבָּה	שָׁלֵל
the lame	take		the prey								
H6455	H962		H957								

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Kings 7:8** (Parallel theme): And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

**Psalms 68:12** (Parallel theme): Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

**1 Corinthians 1:27** (Parallel theme): But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

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