

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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How Will You Be Remembered? (Part 10)

I Kings 14:16; II Kings 12:2; II Kings 18:5

As you look at the life of Hezekiah, not only do you see his purging, but you also see His Praying. The order of these two thoughts are not just circumstantial. The prayer life of Hezekiah would not have been possible without the purging of the things that God said was wrong. Many times people want to have a great prayer life and be able to talk to God like the men and women in the Bible did, or like some person that has passed into history who was known for having a powerful prayer life. But power through prayer cannot come without a purging or cleansing process. Psalm 66:18 says, “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” If there is sin in your life, even an acceptance of what God rejects, then your prayers will not be heard by God. We must be clean and pure by having our sins confessed before God. Then He will hear us.

Hezekiah, as we saw so clearly last month, had purged his own life and the nation of Judah from sin. He had eliminated those things that would hinder him from a close walk with God. When confronted with urgent needs, he was able to ask God for some mighty miracles and God heard and answered his prayers. As you read these accounts, you cannot help but be amazed at what Hezekiah was able to ask God to do and also what he saw done. But remember, (I will say it one more time) they were possible because Hezekiah was right with God. God is still capable of doing mighty works today, but we must be right with Him before He will hear us.

In II Kings 19, you find the first prayer that Hezekiah made. This prayer was *About the Adversary*. In II Kings 18, the setting of this prayer is laid out. In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib the king of Assyria invades Judah. Now any attack from

-2-

any enemy would have been bad, but this was the strongest nation on the earth at this time. Assyria, as the men sent by Sennacherib would say throughout chapter 18, had not encountered defeat. They had absolutely annihilated every nation that they had attacked. They were also very vicious to those who survived the battles. Historical accounts say that they would cut off the thumbs and big toes of the men who did not die in battle. This would prevent these men from holding weapons or being able to run. Thus, they would not be able to start an uprising against Assyria. Now you can understand just a little of the anxiety when Assyria turned toward Judah. Humanly speaking, there was not much hope.

Assyria was the nation that just twenty years earlier had defeated Israel and taken them into captivity. If these ten northern tribes could not defeat Assyria, how could these two southern tribes of Judah withstand the onslaught? The number of soldiers that Hezekiah could call upon would not match the numbers in the Assyrian army. Hezekiah knew that, and he would seek another way to defeat the enemy.

I mentioned earlier that Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, had sent some men to negotiate with Hezekiah. One of them, Rabshakeh, tries to intimidate Hezekiah and Judah into a complete surrender. In II Kings 18:19-21, he tells them that there are no other nations to ally with. Egypt was a “*bruised reed*” incapable of providing support.

In verse 22, Rabshakeh shows his ignorance. He tells Hezekiah and Judah that their God is unable to help. He says that Hezekiah had taken away the high places and altars of the LORD, and told the people to worship in Jerusalem. Rabshakeh is right about what happened, but being a pagan, he did not understand why Hezekiah had removed these false places of worship. As we have already seen, these were not true places of worship. They were places of idolatry at worst, and places of disobedience at best. God did not permit these places. Hezekiah knew this and destroyed them. Rabshakeh was bordering on blasphemy. He did not know what he was talking

about. When he began attacking God, he set in motion the defeat of his mighty army.

After a request by Hezekiah's men to speak in the Syrian language so as not to alarm the people, Rabshakeh continues his verbal assault on Judah. He says that Hezekiah will not be able to lead a fight against Assyria, and then launches into full-fledged blasphemy against God. In II Kings 18:33-35, he equates the God of Judah with the gods of the other nations that Assyria has conquered. Rightly so, he says that these gods have not been able to defeat Assyria. But what Rabshakeh does not realize is these gods are not comparable to Judah's God. Rabshakeh is trying to intimidate Hezekiah and Judah into an easy surrender. Instead, he is encouraging Hezekiah to turn to God. A lopsided battle will take place, but completely contrary to what Rabshakeh and Assyria had imagined.

As II Kings 19 begins, Hezekiah sends word to Isaiah the prophet asking for advice. Isaiah tells him not to be afraid—God will defeat Assyria. Assyria sends one final message in the form of a letter to Hezekiah. Again they tell him that fighting is useless, and they again compare Hezekiah's God to the other false gods. Assyria still does not realize who they are messing with. The other gods were not real. This God is the Creator of the universe.

Upon receiving the letter, Hezekiah bypasses Isaiah and goes directly to the temple and prays to God. His prayer is recorded in II Kings 19:14-19. In this marvelous prayer, he praises God for His position and power. He then pleads with God to listen to this prayer. Hezekiah acknowledges the accomplishments of Assyria, but says they were able to be victorious because these other nations did not serve real gods. They were false gods made by human hands. Hezekiah and Judah were serving the God Who had made them, not gods they had made. Hezekiah knew the difference. Hezekiah concludes the prayer by asking for God to receive all the glory. He does not ask for his name or kingdom to be exalted. Hezekiah says,

“Save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only” (19:19). Because of Hezekiah's humility and his exaltation of God, God answers in a miraculous way.

Judah does not have to raise one sword against Assyria. The night of Hezekiah's prayer, the angel of the LORD went into the camp of Assyria and killed 185,000 soldiers. Sennacherib leaves with an embarrassing defeat. Little Judah with a big God had defeated mighty Assyria. Later, Sennacherib's own children kill him as he is worshiping his false god. Sennacherib, Rabshakeh, and all of Assyria had said that Judah had no hope. In themselves, they did not. All Hezekiah had was God, but that was all that he needed.

But Scripture also records another prayer of Hezekiah. This prayer was *About the Ailment*. In II Kings 20, Isaiah comes and tells Hezekiah that he is going to die. Hezekiah prays to God. He reminds God that he has been faithful to Him. There is no mention in verse 3 that Hezekiah asks to be healed. Perhaps he did say it, but Scripture does not record him saying it. The implication is there because God says that He will heal him in verse 5. But the words, “Heal me,” do not touch God. What causes God to respond to Hezekiah's prayer? Hezekiah's faithfulness. That is what Hezekiah talks about in his prayer. He says, “I have been consistent—*I have walked before thee.*” He also says, “I have been complete—*with a perfect heart.*” Hezekiah desires another miracle from God, and God responds with a miracle because Hezekiah is faithful to Him. It cannot be stressed enough. God desires, even demands faithfulness. Perhaps the reason we do not see great wonders from God today is because we are not faithful to Him.

God, through Isaiah, then asks Hezekiah whether he wants the shadow of the sun to go forward or backward to confirm the miracle will happen. Hezekiah asks for it to go backward. God moves the sun backward. Through one man's prayers, a mighty enemy is destroyed, disease is healed, and the sun moved back. God worked

three mighty miracles through Hezekiah's prayers. May God help us to be faithful to Him that He may work through us.

The final thought about Hezekiah is His Praise. *The Basis* of this praise is because "*He trusted in the LORD God of Israel*" (II Kings 18:5). God will say a wonderful thing about Hezekiah, but it is said because of his faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please [God].*" Faith is essential for salvation and service to God

We also see *The Breadth* of that praise. There was no king like him before or after. Hezekiah was an incomparable man. But it was not him. It was the God that he served. I am sure that if anyone asked Hezekiah, "What makes you so special?," he would reply, "It is not me. I am just trusting in God." May we learn from the life of Hezekiah to completely trust and serve Him.

Three men are remembered: Jeroboam—A Man of Contempt; Joash—A Man of Change; and Hezekiah—A Man of Consistency. How will YOU be remembered?