

The Prayer of Hezekiah

2 Kings 18:28-19:37

July 4, 2010

Our story unfolds in the kingdom of Judah. The background was that Assyria had become a world dominating power. With terrible cruelty and coldness of heart, they were destroying nation after nation.

The northern kingdom of Israel had also been destroyed by Assyria at this point. They had done to Israel what they had also done to many other nations, they carried them away to live in some far-off place, lose their national identity, and simply disappear into the populations of the world. They become what many call the ten lost tribes of Israel. But God preserved a remnant for Himself of these tribes which we will see as we continue our study through the bible.

Assyria also brought people from some other conquered nations to live in Samaria, another name for northern Israel. Those people became known as the Samaritans. They were there during the time of Jesus' ministry. In fact, it was a Samaritan woman whom he led to the Lord in John chapter 4. When the Pharisees wanted to insult Jesus they called him a Samaritan.

After Assyria took captive the northern kingdom of Israel, they turned their sights to Judah where Hezekiah was King. They intended to destroy Judah as well.

As we have been studying through these chapters, we've seen the significance of both prophets and kings in regard to the spiritual and national strength of Israel. Each of them had a separate, yet significant role. What's interesting is that Jesus is both King and prophet, He will completely fulfill the place of prophet and king when He comes again in the near future.

So Sennacherib sent his officers to Jerusalem in an attempt to destroy the nation of Judah in a war of words.

This encounter between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, king of Assyria, became an absolutely monumental point in the history of the nation. If they were taken away to another place and a foreign people were given this land, then all of God's promises would come to nothing.

A great spiritual battle was unfolding in this story and there are many spiritual insights and applications for our own lives that we should seek to apply in how we live before God and how we respond when troubles come our way.

I. In a War of Words – Abide in the Truth

- The king of Assyria had sent his officials to Hezekiah in an attempt to destroy them in a war of words.
- His opening strategy was straightforward; cause their faith in God to be shaken so that fear would control their hearts, and then they would be easy to destroy.
- Rabshakeh's challenge to their faith was in verse 22, "If you say to me, 'We trust in Jehovah our God,' well, didn't Hezekiah take down His high places?"
- The Jewish leaders then asked Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic rather than in Judean, but that only caused him to shout all the louder.
- In verse 30, "Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, 'The Lord will surely deliver us, and the city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'"
- This is the same strategy our enemy would use today. If he can shake your faith so that you do

not have confidence in who God is in your life, then that would allow fear to defeat you.

A. The enemy gives promises as well

- Notice the strategy, Rabshakeh tried to shake their confidence in the Lord, tried to strike fear into their hearts, and then tried to soothe their fears with promises of his own.
- He promised them that there would be peace, that he would move them to a place where they could feel at home, where there would be an abundance of good things, and that they would live and not die.
- We need to recognize this as a strategy of the enemy today. Doesn't he try to convince people about how good life could be if they just surrendered to him?

Illus – “Life will be so much more exciting over here. You’re missing out on all the fun, man! This is where you can really live, don’t worry, there’s no death here!”

Illus - In the original sin of man, wasn't that the very strategy that the serpent used with Eve? He drove a wedge between her and God and then offered her something he said was better.

Genesis 3:4- 7 Then their eyes were opened.

- Israel was in the land that God had promised them, all his blessings for them were connected also with this land because it was his, he had given it to them, and there they would prosper if they would trust in the Lord with all their heart.

- If the enemy promises that he can make you happier, more satisfied in life, that you'll have more fun, or more joy, or more abundance, then we need to see it for what it is -- a lie from the pit of hell.

Illus – Jesus was also tempted by the enemy with similar promises...

Matthew 4:8-11 Jesus’ encounter with the enemy.

B. Sometimes silence is the best answer

- Rabshakeh had used every powerful strategy in his war of words. He tried to instill fear in their hearts, he gave false promises about how good life would be if they would just surrender, and he tried to shipwreck their faith.
- But it's also clear that Rabshakeh didn't know what he was talking about. He talked about Hezekiah's reforms as if they were bad, when in fact they were exactly what Israel needed.
- He tried to claim that Israel's downfall in the north happened because their gods were weak. The truth was that Israel fell in the north because they turned their back on the only true and living God to follow after the gods of permissiveness.
- What good would it do to give Rabshakeh a lesson in the truth? Did he value the truth? Would he be swayed if he knew the truth? The answer is no, the truth meant nothing to the enemy.
- Here's a great lesson, don't debate with someone who doesn't value the truth. Clearly Satan doesn't

value the truth. In the garden, it was debating with the serpent that got Eve in trouble.

- Jesus had some clear words to say about the enemy and his view of the truth.

John 8:44, "He does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

- Hezekiah told the people to be silent and to not answer him a word. That was great wisdom for this situation.

C. The truth will set you free

- Rather than debating with an enemy who did not value the truth, Hezekiah ran to the Lord and asked that God would rebuke those words.
- This is a deeply spiritual point that we need to understand for it will have tremendous impact on the strength of our faith. In times of trouble, turn to the Lord and stand on the truth that you receive from Him.

Proverbs 18:10, The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.

John 8:31-32, "If you abide in My word... you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Romans 10:17, So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Luke 8:15, "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the Word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance."

II. Lay it out Before the Lord

- After this first war of words, Hezekiah was encouraged by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah.
- "Do not be afraid because of the words you have heard. I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."
- Rabshakeh then had to go and join the king of Assyria in another small battle, so he sent a letter to Hezekiah in another attempt to defeat him by discouraging his faith.
- Hezekiah's response is an absolutely wonderful example for every one of us. He went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord, as if to say, "Read what they are saying about you, Lord!"

A. God is so pleased with sincere prayer

- Hezekiah's prayer is a wonderful example of the simplicity and power of sincere and humble prayer.
- Look at God's response in verse 20, "Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib, King of Assyria, I have heard you."
- "That was exactly the right thing to do, Hezekiah," you can almost hear God say.
- We read earlier that Hezekiah had put on sackcloth as a response to this spiritual attack. Sackcloth is an outward symbol of the inward

reality of a humble and contrite heart; at least it was supposed to be.

Illus - When Samaria was under siege by Aram, or Syria, the king put on sackcloth beneath his clothes, but it quickly became clear that it was a symbol only because instead of humbling his heart, he blamed God instead.

- If there's an outward symbol, but no inward reality, that's called religion and God is most certainly not pleased with it.

Isaiah 29:13, Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words and honor me with their lip service, but they removed their hearts far from me, and their reverence for me consists of tradition learned by rote..."

- But when there is a sincere and humble reality of the heart, God is very pleased. It's the proud and the haughty that God brings down.

Psalm 51:17, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

James 4:6, But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Matthew 23:12, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

- It was Sennacherib's arrogance that brought Him down, because he raged against God rather than acknowledging him.
- See verse 25-28. "I will put a hook in your nose.

B. Prayer availeth much

- This prayer of Hezekiah was the turning point of the history of the nation of Israel.
- God is so ready to take us back and to touch and heal our lives. Notice in verse 21 that God even refers to Israel as, "The virgin daughter of Zion."
- First, it's important for us to understand the significance that God places on prayer in regard to spiritual warfare, and therefore spiritual victory.

James 5:16, The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

- Turning to God in prayer is also an acknowledgment that our point of strength is not in how much armament we have, but whether God is with us.

Ephesians 6:12, For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

- That night the angel of the Lord struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. This event is also listed in the annals of Assyrian history. What an amazing answer to Hezekiah's prayer.