

# HEZEKIAH LEARNS TO PRAY

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*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, May 27, 2018*

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This is the story of a boy who became king, and the king who became a man.

Who here has prepared a personal résumé to present your background and skills for a job search?

Some years ago, an ancient document was discovered in a small hillside cave in the Judean desert. It has circulated widely in educational and professional circles. Perhaps you have read it yourself...

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph  
Woodcrafter's Carpenter Shop  
Nazareth 25922

From: Jordan Management Consultants

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully. As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation, and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious,

and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely,  
Jordan Management Consultants

What if Jesus had chosen the twelve based on the modern methods of leadership selection? Most of them never would have had a chance to participate!

Aren't you glad that when Jesus looks at you for Kingdom service, He doesn't measure you by your background or immediate condition, but by what you could become with His grace and power? Jesus chooses people, not for who they are, but for what they can become in Him.

Jesus sees the potential in all of us, and calls us to be disciples. Jesus is still saying, "Follow Me!"

Actually, in life, we seldom get the job we are truly qualified for. God likes us to fill shoes that are too big for our feet. He usually gives us a job for which we can qualify only if we rely on Him.

Like marriage. Or ministry.

God shapes us by our tasks, our responsibilities.

If you feel unqualified, inadequate—you may be just the person for the job! But only with God's help.

Today, we're going to read the story of a boy who became king, and the king who became a man. It's one story of how God develops His servants.

I hope you will find a Bible and keep it open in your lap as you follow along today, because we're going to read together two chapters from Second Kings, chapters 18 and 19.

2 Kings 18

**(Setting the Scene:) Hezekiah Rules in Judah**

*<sup>1</sup> Hezekiah son of Ahaz began to rule over Judah in the third year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel. <sup>2</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. <sup>3</sup> He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestor David had done. <sup>4</sup> He removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had*

made, because the people of Israel had been offering sacrifices to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan.

<sup>5</sup> Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before or after his time. <sup>6</sup> He remained faithful to the Lord in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the Lord had given Moses. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. He revolted against the king of Assyria and refused to pay him tribute. <sup>8</sup> He also conquered the Philistines as far distant as Gaza and its territory, from their smallest outpost to their largest walled city.

<sup>9</sup> During the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, King Sennacherib of Assyria attacked the city of Samaria and began a siege against it.

<sup>10</sup> Three years later, during the sixth year of King Hezekiah's reign and the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, Samaria fell. <sup>11</sup> At that time the king of Assyria exiled the Israelites to Assyria and placed them in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. <sup>12</sup> For they refused to listen to the Lord their God and obey him. Instead, they violated his covenant—all the laws that Moses the Lord's servant had commanded them to obey.

Becoming king is not the same as becoming a man. Position does not equal character. To have a testimony, there must be a test, for character is forged in the fire of our circumstance.

### **God was With Him, Still Assyria Invades Judah**

<sup>13</sup> In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified towns of Judah and conquered them. <sup>14</sup> King Hezekiah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. I will pay whatever tribute money you demand if you will only withdraw." The king of Assyria then demanded a settlement of more than eleven tons of silver and one ton of gold. <sup>15</sup> To gather this amount, King Hezekiah used all the silver stored in the Temple of the Lord and in the palace treasury. <sup>16</sup> Hezekiah even stripped the gold from the doors of the Lord's Temple and from the doorposts he had overlaid with gold, and he gave it all to the Assyrian king.

Hezekiah complied with Sennacherib's demands, even though they were excessive. To do so, he gave away what had been dedicated to the Lord, hoping that God would understand his irreverence.

### **King of Assyria Reneges on Their Deal**

<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the king of Assyria sent his commander in chief, his field commander, and his chief of staff from Lachish with a huge army to confront King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. The Assyrians took up a position beside the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is washed. <sup>18</sup> They summoned King Hezekiah, but the king sent these officials to meet with them: Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator; Shebna the court secretary; and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian.

The enemy always makes promises he never intends to fulfill. Jesus said of the devil, *“He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44). Once you have complied with his threats or his promises, you have already compromised your character, and he can do just what he wants.

He roars like a lion, boasting of his power, as if you had no Protector. But you do!

### **Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem**

<sup>19</sup> *Then the Assyrian king’s chief of staff told them to give this message to Hezekiah:*

*“This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident? <sup>20</sup> Do you think that mere words can substitute for military skill and strength? Who are you counting on, that you have rebelled against me? <sup>21</sup> On Egypt? If you lean on Egypt, it will be like a reed that splinters beneath your weight and pierces your hand. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is completely unreliable!*

<sup>22</sup> *“But perhaps you will say to me, ‘We are trusting in the Lord our God!’ But isn’t he the one who was insulted by Hezekiah? Didn’t Hezekiah tear down his shrines and altars and make everyone in Judah and Jerusalem worship only at the altar here in Jerusalem?*

<sup>23</sup> *“I’ll tell you what! Strike a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you 2,000 horses if you can find that many men to ride on them! <sup>24</sup> With your tiny army, how can you think of challenging even the weakest contingent of my master’s troops, even with the help of Egypt’s chariots and charioteers? <sup>25</sup> What’s more, do you think we have invaded your land without the Lord’s direction? The Lord himself told us, ‘Attack this land and destroy it!’ ”*

This is reminiscent of the serpent’s tone in the Garden of Eden (“Did God really say...? It’s not true! God has selfish motives. You will be better off.”).

### **Divide and Conquer (Ever the Enemy’s Tactic)**

<sup>26</sup> *Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Assyrian chief of staff, “Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it well. Don’t speak in Hebrew, for the people on the wall will hear.”*

<sup>27</sup> *But Sennacherib’s chief of staff replied, “Do you think my master sent this message only to you and your master? He wants all the people to hear it, for when we put this city under siege, they will suffer along with you. They will be so hungry and thirsty that they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine.”*

<sup>28</sup> *Then the chief of staff stood and shouted in Hebrew to the people on the wall, “Listen to this message from the great king of Assyria! <sup>29</sup> This is what the king says: Don’t let Hezekiah deceive you. He will never be able to rescue you from my power. <sup>30</sup> Don’t let him fool you into trusting in the Lord by saying, ‘The Lord will surely rescue us. This city will never fall into the hands of the Assyrian king!’*

<sup>31</sup> *“Don’t listen to Hezekiah! These are the terms the king of Assyria is offering: Make peace with me—open the gates and come out. Then each of you can continue eating from your own*

grapevine and fig tree and drinking from your own well. <sup>32</sup> Then I will arrange to take you to another land like this one—a land of grain and new wine, bread and vineyards, olive groves and honey. Choose life instead of death!

*“Don’t listen to Hezekiah when he tries to mislead you by saying, ‘The Lord will rescue us!’*

*<sup>33</sup> Have the gods of any other nations ever saved their people from the king of Assyria? <sup>34</sup> What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did any god rescue Samaria from my power? <sup>35</sup> What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? So what makes you think that the Lord can rescue Jerusalem from me?”*

The tactic failed this time because the people followed the instruction of their leader; they didn’t answer back.

### **People Trusted; Leaders Despaired**

*<sup>36</sup> But the people were silent and did not utter a word because Hezekiah had commanded them, “Do not answer him.”*

*<sup>37</sup> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, the palace administrator; Shebna the court secretary; and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian, went back to Hezekiah. They tore their clothes in despair, and they went in to see the king and told him what the Assyrian chief of staff had said.*

Now this is astonishing! The people put up with the verbal abuse, trusting their king. The chief of staff was sure he could persuade them with his golden promises, but Hezekiah had already prepared them and warned them not engage with the enemy. (You cannot win by engaging him on his terms!)

On the other hand, Hezekiah’s board were at their wits end; they couldn’t see the way out.

But what has God told us? *“When you are tempted, [God] will show you a way out so that you can endure”* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## Chapter 19

### **Hezekiah Seeks the Lord’s Help**

*<sup>1</sup> When King Hezekiah heard their report, he tore his clothes and put on burlap and went into the Temple of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and the leading priests, all dressed in burlap, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup> They told him, “This is what King Hezekiah says: Today is a day of trouble, insults, and disgrace. It is like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to deliver the baby. <sup>4</sup> But perhaps the Lord your God has heard the Assyrian chief of staff, sent by the king to defy the living God, and will punish him for his words. Oh, pray for those of us who are left!”*

Hezekiah began to seek a word from the Lord. He called the board to a prayer meeting. They were desperate!

## The Lord Responds

<sup>5</sup> After King Hezekiah's officials delivered the king's message to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup> the prophet replied, "Say to your master, 'This is what the Lord says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king's messengers. <sup>7</sup> Listen! I myself will move against him, and the king will receive a message that he is needed at home. So he will return to his land, where I will have him killed with a sword.' "

"Don't be disturbed! I've got this!"

We just don't get how important this is. We hear these as comforting words (which they are), but we overlook the imperative. It is a command!

"Don't be disturbed!" "Don't be afraid." "Don't be anxious about anything."

We fail to realize how fear and anxiety set us up for losses. Animals can sense fear. To a predator, it is an attractant. When you express fear, you attract the work of the enemy.

Faith expressed, on the other hand, diminishes hostility and settles unrest. (Think about Jesus, standing before Governor Pilate: "You could have no power over me unless it had been given you from heaven.")

*"A mild answer turns away wrath, sharp words stir up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1).

## Proposed Answer of Fear

<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the Assyrian chief of staff left Jerusalem and went to consult the king of Assyria, who had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah.

<sup>9</sup> Soon afterward King Sennacherib received word that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading an army to fight against him. Before leaving to meet the attack, he sent messengers back to Hezekiah in Jerusalem with this message:

<sup>10</sup> "This message is for King Hezekiah of Judah. Don't let your God, in whom you trust, deceive you with promises that Jerusalem will not be captured by the king of Assyria. <sup>11</sup> You know perfectly well what the kings of Assyria have done wherever they have gone. They have completely destroyed everyone who stood in their way! Why should you be any different? <sup>12</sup> Have the gods of other nations rescued them—such nations as Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Tel-assar? My predecessors destroyed them all! <sup>13</sup> What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?"

The devil will try to put words in your mouth; words that express fear. Resist him and he will flee from you.

Now listen to the words of the boy-king who became a man (of God).

## Real Answer of Faith

<sup>14</sup> After Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it, he went up to the Lord's Temple and spread it out before the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the Lord: "O Lord, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth. <sup>16</sup> Bend down, O Lord, and listen! Open your eyes, O Lord, and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words of defiance against the living God.

<sup>17</sup> "It is true, Lord, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all these nations. <sup>18</sup> And they have thrown the gods of these nations into the fire and burned them. But of course the Assyrians could destroy them! They were not gods at all—only idols of wood and stone shaped by human hands. <sup>19</sup> Now, O Lord our God, rescue us from his power; then all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you alone, O Lord, are God."

Instead of mouthing the enemy's words, Hezekiah declared his faith in God. He acknowledged the facts of the situation, but also the facts of the "greatness" of God, and asked the Lord to demonstrate His greatness.

## Isaiah Predicts Judah's Deliverance

<sup>20</sup> Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer about King Sennacherib of Assyria. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord has spoken this word against him:

"The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and laughs at you.

The daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head in derision as you flee.

<sup>22</sup> "Whom have you been defying and ridiculing? Against whom did you raise your voice?

At whom did you look with such haughty eyes? It was the Holy One of Israel!

<sup>23</sup> By your messengers you have defied the Lord.

You have said, 'With my many chariots I have conquered the highest mountains—yes, the remotest peaks of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars and its finest cypress trees. I have reached its farthest corners and explored its deepest forests. <sup>24</sup> I have dug wells in many foreign lands and refreshed myself with their water. With the sole of my foot I stopped up all the rivers of Egypt!'

<sup>25</sup> "But have you not heard? I decided this long ago. Long ago I planned it, and now I am making it happen. I planned for you to crush fortified cities into heaps of rubble.

<sup>26</sup> That is why their people have so little power and are so frightened and confused. They are as weak as grass, as easily trampled as tender green shoots. They are like grass sprouting on a housetop, scorched before it can grow lush and tall.

<sup>27</sup> "But I know you well—where you stay and when you come and go. I know the way you have raged against me. <sup>28</sup> And because of your raging against me and your arrogance, which I have heard for myself, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth. I will make you return by the same road on which you came."

The sovereign God revealed His control over what seemed like an out-of-control situation. From “long ago” He planned the scenario and orchestrated its participants, for an end of His own design—ultimately, to show His glory.

### **Good for Those Who Love Him**

*<sup>29</sup> Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Here is the proof that what I say is true:*

*“This year you will eat only what grows up by itself, and next year you will eat what springs up from that. But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them; you will tend vineyards and eat their fruit.*

*<sup>30</sup> And you who are left in Judah, who have escaped the ravages of the siege, will put roots down in your own soil and will grow up and flourish. <sup>31</sup> For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion.*

*The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will make this happen!*

*<sup>32</sup> “And this is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria:*

*“His armies will not enter Jerusalem. They will not even shoot an arrow at it. They will not march outside its gates with their shields nor build banks of earth against its walls.*

*<sup>33</sup> The king will return to his own country by the same road on which he came. He will not enter this city, says the Lord.*

*<sup>34</sup> For my own honor and for the sake of my servant David, I will defend this city and protect it.”*

*“We are well aware that God works with those who love Him, those who have been called in accordance with His purpose, and turns everything to their good” (Romans 8:28).*

### **God Fights Hezekiah’s Battle**

*<sup>35</sup> That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. <sup>36</sup> Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there.*

*<sup>37</sup> One day while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son, Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria.*

What threats are you facing?

Which enemy is urging you to capitulate?

How has the enemy suggested that God is weak or selfish?

Will you let fear continue?

Will you fan the flame of anxiety?

Today, we have heard the story of a boy who became king, and the boy-king who became a man.



Learn a lesson from King Hezekiah. Learn to pray.

When the chips are down, when no earthly help will suffice, will you seek a word from the Lord? Will you begin to praise His unalterable attributes and promises?

If you lift Him up above your feelings, His greatness will shine over your circumstances.

The only fight you have to win is the battle between your ears, with your own thoughts and feelings. Your battle is not with people or circumstances.

If you will fight the inside battle by faith in Jesus, God will fight the outside battle for you.

If you will fight to honor God with your words, regardless of your thoughts or feelings, God will fight to rescue you from your circumstances.