

Seven Steps to Consistent Christian Living


Step 3A: Hezekiah; *praying under pressure* (2Kings 18-19)

Introduction

A Navy ship set sail off the coast of California midst strong winds and storm threatening skies. The storm grew worst within an hour to the point that the crew feared that they wouldn't make it to their destination. The captain called the crew together and the chaplain to provide words of hope, and he urged everyone to pray for deliverance. As the waves grew fiercer and tossed the ship about, a seaman hurried to the chaplain and said, "I haven't prayed a day in my life; what should I do?" The chaplain said calmly, "Oh my dear sailor, prayers in times like these are the easiest of them all. Repeat after me." The chaplain looked up to heaven and yelled to God in a loud voice, "Heeeelp!"

No doubt many have learned to pray in times of crisis. This lesson examines the prayer of Hezekiah and how he prayed in an hour of one of Judah's greatest challenges.


Lesson Objective: To learn how to stay strong and remain faithful to God through prayer in times of stress.

Questions to ponder: This lesson utilizes a self-study method, look for the  symbol for guided questions for examination, interpretation, and application.

The Plot

The Man 

Hezekiah became king of Judah at age 25 and reigned 29 years. He trusted in the Lord and kept His commands. (2Kings 18:5-6)

The Challenge 

Assyria had already defeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel and carried the inhabitants into captivity. King Sennacherib of Assyria captured all the fortified cities of Judah, now he was threatening to do the same to Hezekiah and Jerusalem because he had rebelled against the former king of Assyria and refused to serve him.

Sennacherib sent his field commander to Jerusalem to mock and ridicule Judah in front of their key military officials. This was no doubt a common tactic to weaken morale and discourage Judah's army. Against the backdrop of impending invasion of the Assyrian army, Hezekiah prays his prayer (2Kgs 18:17-37).

Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. ³⁰Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says, 'The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' (Assyria's field commander (2Kgs 18:28-30, NIV).



Do you think the enemy tries to discourage Christians from trusting in God during difficulty and stress? How should we overcome such attacks?

THE PRAYER

After hearing these threats from Sennacherib, Hezekiah humbles himself in sackcloth (coarse goat's hair), sends messengers to the prophet Isaiah, and pleads his case for deliverance before God. His prayer can be divided into four sections (2Kings 19:1-2; 14-19).



- Adoration: Offering worship and praise
- Attention: Seeking assurance prayer is heard
- Argument: Making a case for deliverance
- Appeal: Urgent petition

(2 Kings 19:14-19)

Adoration

15. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: “LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Attention

16. Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

Argument

17. “It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. 18. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands.

Appeal

19. Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, LORD, are God.” (NIV)



- Adoration: Christians pray to the only God and Creator; how does that make you feel?
- Attention: The pressure of the moment shows in Hezekiah's address to God. Do you think it's OK to tell God exactly how you feel? Why or why not?
- Argument: Hezekiah makes a distinction between the gods of the nations Assyria had defeated and Judah's God. What was the difference? Why should that give us confidence when we pray?
- Appeal: According to Hezekiah, what would God's defense of Judah mean? How can we apply this principle to ourselves, family, and church? For example, if God blesses you, what will that mean for your family, church, or community? Have you ever prayed this way?

God's Assurances

The Prophet Isaiah Brings Assurances from God (2 Kings 19:20-34)

God's Answer

God's Actions

<p>³⁴ “Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria:</p> <p>“He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. ³³ By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. ³⁴ I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.” (2Kgs 19:32-34, NIV)</p>	<p>³⁵ That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! ³⁶ So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. (2kgs 19:35-37, NIV)</p> <p>(Sennacherib was later killed by his two sons while he worshipped his god Nisroch).</p>
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Conclusion/Application

God miraculously delivered Jerusalem from certain defeat through the fervent prayer of Hezekiah, a righteous king. Although Christians today won't experience the dramatic situation Hezekiah and Jerusalem did, let's consider how we can apply a principle that the story teaches by answering these two questions.



Note: When a story emphasizes or repeats something, it is obviously an important point to remember.

1. What principle or lesson do you think the story teaches?
2. How can you apply the principle to your life today?

Assignment

In the coming weeks, invite others to read this lesson and discuss the lesson with them. Discuss the questions to ponder. Finally, discuss the principles and applications of the lesson together.
