

Hezekiah's Prayer

by Bill Barratt

Bill Barratt's sermon on Hezekiah's prayer emphasizes the power of faith and integrity in facing impossible challenges with God's help.

Duration: 36:23

Scripture: 2 Kings 19:14-19, 2 Kings 19:35

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance and protection in the face of attacks from the enemy. He warns against believing the lies of the devil, who seeks to corrupt and destroy lives. The preacher encourages the congregation to be people of integrity and character, dedicated to God's work. He emphasizes the need for unity and support within the church, urging the congregation to pray for and stand behind their leaders. The sermon concludes with a powerful example of how God can bring victory with just one angel, highlighting the power of prayer and the presence of angels in our lives.

Transcript

I'm going to read to you another great prayer from the Bible. We'll find it in chapter 19 of 2 Kings. 2 Kings chapter 19, beginning at verse 14.

It is the prayer of Hezekiah, the king of Judah. And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers and read it. And Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord.

And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down Thine ear and hear.

Open, Lord, Thine eyes and see. And hear the words of Sennacherib, which has sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire.

But they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of His hands, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only.

Then Isaiah, the son of Amos, said to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which Thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard. God hears prayer. I would like to paint the picture, if I can, of the awful situation that Hezekiah was in, in the city of Jerusalem.

About eleven years or so before this, the Assyrians had invaded Israel. Now, the chosen race had been divided into two sections. Israel, with the capital at Samaria, and Judah, with the capital at Jerusalem.

Israel had rebelled and sinned against God. And God's judgment came upon them, as it does on all nations that forsake God. And the Assyrians besieged Samaria, the capital.

And they put their armies around Samaria, and they just sat down, and they waited, and starved them out for three years. Now, you can have courage, you can have weapons, but if you can't fight your enemy, and you've nothing to eat, and eventually even that which you drink is difficult to get hold of, then you become a very easy prey, eventually. Of course, that is a typical tactic of war.

And so, about eight years after that, the Assyrians came again, at the command of king Sennacherib. They captured all the cities of Judah. Now here, Jerusalem, the holy city, God's pride and joy was the only remnant left, still free.

So they were in a desperate situation. All Israel had been taken captive for about seven years. Now all the cities of Judah had been taken, and the great army of Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem.

They could easily starve them out. What a situation! A vast army, a great and mighty king, and one city with a godly king, Hezekiah. I want to say to you, that situation was absolutely impossible for Hezekiah.

The army consisted of well over, it is estimated, 200,000 well-equipped and armed soldiers. Now don't just think of over 200,000 well-trained, well-equipped, battle-trained soldiers, but all their equipment and chariots and horses and everything else. One city.

To give you an idea of the strength of that particular force against one single city, Napoleon, when he wanted to invade Europe and then England, he had at one attempt to invade 210,000 men, and he thought it was enough to invade England. Over 200,000 here for one city. All around them enemies.

No way to escape whatsoever. And not a weak, demoralized army, but a victorious, well-trained, battle-hardened army. What chance? Some of you, maybe I, think our task is impossible.

Some of us may believe and think that the Christian Church task is impossible in England alone. I had a letter this week from an evangelistic body who were trying to encourage the churches to witness, and in the write-up they said this, written by, I think, Cecil Black, the MP, who is a born-again believer, a Baptist, I believe, and a supporter of this evangelical group. And the write-up was that two terrible forces in England over the last decade or more have changed our morals, changed our beliefs, and changed our society for the worse.

And the two forces were named as Atheism and Humanism. They've infiltrated into all the political spheres, places of government, BBC, papers, all kinds of political parties. But the article went on to say there is even now a third dimension, and perhaps even more dangerous, to take us further down into degradation, decadence, looseness, weakness, and no backbone, to ruin the fibre of our character as a nation.

An awful, terrible work has been done in the lives and the education of our young people. It's a hopeless situation. Christianity has been put on a little tiny shelf in the back room.

And the third terrible dimension that's come into our land is a host of heathen religions with false gods, but worse than that, devil worship, witchcraft, and vultified cults revived from ancient times, Satanism. You can hardly turn round a corner without seeing an evidence of something. Some temple to a heathen god, some Greek mansion in the country that's been bought with money that's come from abroad to enthrone this nation.

Never in my opinion, at least in my lifetime, has England been at such a low ebb. The task may seem impossible. I want to encourage you this morning.

With God, nothing is impossible. Here was Ezekiel, an absolutely impossible situation. And I want to look at his prayer that we may learn, for we have claimed the city of Manchester for almighty God, and we mean to do all in our power to win it by his grace.

It is nothing to God, to us, impossible. With God, nothing is impossible, providing we know the rules of the game, and our enemy, and our forces. Now the first thing I want to point out is that when you're in a situation like that, you cannot afford to have Christian playboys, or Christian playgirls.

It's war. And the only way that God will move, has moved, and is ready to move today, is through people of integrity and character. That's the first point we've got to remember.

And the more people in this church who have integrity and character for God, then the more will God work, and the sooner will come the victory. To win against a powerful force, you need commandos, disciples, dedicated people, people who are not afraid of anything. You don't win any other way.

You play around for years, and probably lose. But a good dedicated body of people, with a faith in the living God, the battle soon won, if you mean business. Now, Hezekiah's character, if you turn to the previous chapter, it gives you a good description.

Verse 3, And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. That's a good point of character. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

Never mind about what men think, or tradition, or denomination, or your best friend, or your mother, or your father. It's what you do in the sight of God that matters. That's character.

He who is not willing to leave father and mother for my sake, brothers and sisters, friends, is not worthy of me. Character. The man who is not willing to discharge all and go to warfare, well, he might as well stay home digging up potatoes.

He's not a soldier. So, it's character. First, he did right in the sight of the Lord.

Second, he removed the high places, and break the images, and cut down the groves, and break in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made. So, not only did he have a great character to do right, but as a leader of the nation, he set the example. He broke all the idolatry in the nation.

He smashed all the idols. Broke down the images. And he said, that's the way we are going to worship.

You know, he called, it was Hezekiah, I believe, who gave the name. The brazen serpent, he called it, Nehushka. It means, a brazen trifle.

A brazen vanity. Now, if you remember the brazen serpent, it was a marvelous thing that God asked Moses to do, when the children of Israel were being bitten by fiery serpents because they'd rebelled. And they cried to Moses, ask God to forgive us.

And so Moses made a brazen serpent and put it on a pole. And everyone that looked at the brazen serpent, it said, lived. And the plague was stayed.

Now, that was a marvelous thing. But you see, afterwards, because of their fallen nature and their rebellion, instead of worshipping the God who delivered them, they began to worship the brazen serpent. How subtle is the enemy's works among the children of God.

It's not the wooden cross we worship, it's the Christ who died upon it. And so that may have been even the start of leading on to all kinds of idolatry. Now, I like a cross.

I like to see a crucifixion, whatever you may think. It reminds me of my salvation. But God forbid that I should ever worship it.

It's nice to have. It's nice to even wear and say, this is who I am, I belong to Christ. But let us never forget it's the God behind.

He broke them down. Man of character. He smashed their traditions.

He went against all those who had taught them these things. His character, He trusted in the Lord God of Israel. Oh, that's a tremendous part of character.

How can we win a battle if we don't trust our commander? Who do you have faith in? The power of Satan or the power of God? He trusted in his God. There's no victory without that. That's faith.

His character, He claimed to the Lord and departed not from following Him. He didn't backslide. He didn't hanker for the things of the world.

He claimed and clung to the Lord as God. God was His meat and His drink, His life. And He obeyed His commandments.

That's the kind of character we need in the church if we're going to win the battle. Men and women, it will have nothing to do with idolatry or men's traditions. Those who will always do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, those who trust in God with all their heart, cleave to God with all their heart, have nothing to do with the world and be as Christ said, not of the world, in it, but not of it.

And to obey His commandments, character. First step to prayers that will be heard by God. In the measure of our character before God, that is the measure that our prayers will be effective.

Now I'd like you to notice very quickly, if you read it for yourself, the tremendous attack. The hopeless position I've explained. Then Rab Shakei, who was the spokesman for Sennacherib, shouted out outside the city with the great army round, shouted out to the people in Jerusalem.

And he said to them, three things mainly. You're surrounded. We've destroyed everyone around you.

We can easily defeat you. He said, if I give you a couple of thousand horses, you couldn't even find men to put on them. You don't stand a chance against the least of the captain of my master.

Now don't be foolish. Who are you trusting in? He shouted out. Are you trusting in Egypt? Your ally? Egypt? They won't help you.

It's like a reed that when you put your hand on it, it will pierce through. You can't trust in Egypt's horses and chariots. And children of God, we can't trust in the arm of the flesh either.

Only in God. He says, who are you trusting in? Are you trusting in Zachariah? What's Zachariah been able to do to stop us capturing all these cities of Judah that he's king over? Are you trusting in Zachariah? I don't believe it. Are you trusting in your God? Have not the armies of Assyria destroyed all the nations and their gods couldn't stop them? All the gods they had.

Your God can't stop my master from conquering you. Then he said, Look, why don't you take no notice of your leader? That's always the attack, you know. Don't listen to what he's saying.

Can you hear the devil's whisper in your ear? This is his tactics. Don't listen to him. Listen.

Come to me. Can you hear the devil's whisper? Look. Don't go in there and starve for three years.

You've seen what we've done. You've no chance. Egypt's far away.

Ezekiah can't stand against us. Your God can't stand against us. It's an impossible task.

Look, I'll tell you what we'll do. Come out. Leave Ezekiah and those who want to stay.

Come out. And we'll make you welcome. And we'll put you at one side until we're ready to take you away to our country.

Can you hear the whisper of the devil? Listen. We've got a country like yours. With milk and wine and honey.

And trees to dress and work to do. And you don't have to die. You can become part of our nation.

Why don't you come over? Can you hear the whisper? It's not so bad in the world. What are you fighting for? Take it easy. You can't win anyway.

The battle's too strong. Don't listen to that bastard Ballot. He's a fanatic.

Just have a look round. I've got everybody in this city. Look at all my false cults.

Look at what we've done. There's no chance. Do you think God will stop it? Can you hear his whisper? He's exactly the same today.

As he was yesterday. But thank God. So is the Lord.

Now, Ezekiah sent some messages out to him. And they said, look, don't shout into people's ears. Talk in the Syrian language.

We understand it. Don't let them hear you. He says, I'm not dealing with you.

I've not come to talk to you. Or Ezekiah. Of course the devil wants nothing to do with leaders.

Usually they're impossible to win anyway if they're worth the salt. I've not come to you. So he shouts at the wall.

But God brought a rumour. And Rabshake said, he said, now look. He said, just because this has happened, all words to that effect.

Don't think that you can trust in Ezekiah. We'll be back. Now don't you trust.

So if you get a small victory, you know, the devil will say, well that's nothing, you wait. We'll be back. So he sent this letter to Ezekiah.

Now then, the man of character, what did he do? We'll find this in the 19th chapter in the reading. And I want to go through the points. First of all, he was a man of character.

Verse 14. And Ezekiah received the letter at the hand of the messengers and read it. One.

Ezekiah went up into the house of the Lord. One. Have you got a prayer closet? Are you coming to the prayer meetings? And Ezekiah went to the house of the Lord.

One. Two. And he spread the letter before the Lord.

Now, I don't know whether he did, but it says he received the letter and he read it. But he didn't call his counselors. The first thing he did was to spread it before the Lord.

That's what we've got to do. Whenever you're attacked, whenever the enemy tries to discourage you, when he shows you Manchester as impossible, when he tells you to go into the world, it's alright, give up, you'll have a good time. What are you sacrificing for? You're only young, enjoy yourself.

Lies! Young people. Lies. Lies.

Lies! He'll destroy you. He'll corrupt you. He'll get you hooked on drugs.

He'll get you into vice. He'll ruin your life. He'll blast your marriage.

Lies, I tell you. Do you believe it? He wants you good. God or the devil.

Is there a devil? Is there a God? He's a robber, he's a thief, he's a murderer, he's a liar from the beginning, he's a serpent, he's a destroyer. Don't trust him. He'll give you milk and honey and wine, alright.

He'll let it touch the tip of your tongue. And then he'll blast you in hell forever. And if he gets in his grips, he'll have a job to get out.

Don't go to him. I've warned you. And he's powerful and he's subtle and he'll deceive you unless you mean business with God.

There's only one way to go on with God, that's utterly dedicated discipleship. You might last a little life playing around on your scooter, but you'll soon be in his kingdom if you don't mean business. And I'm out for people who mean business.

A great church or a small one, but commandos. We'll do the job then. Everybody else is a hindrance to the work.

Amen. Oh yes, praise God. You don't win battles with chocolate soldiers who melt in the sun.

You want people of character, people of obedience, people of discipline, people who think minor things and have their priorities right. Understand leadership, understand the laws of the game. Stop grumbling, get behind, we're in war.

Divide in the church with murmurs and whisperings and little discontentments. If we are making mistakes, well get behind us and pray for us and the God will make the mistake a success. Get behind the leadership, get behind the church.

Pray, seek, build up unity, endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Love your neighbor. Away with these things.

Amen. Well, something to get excited about with a war on isn't it. Everybody seems to be falling asleep.

Including me. God keeps waking me up. Praise the Lord.

Oh, praise the Lord. Amen. I feel like nineteen.

I'll tell you young people, the spirit keeps you alive. You'll score more goals if you've got Jesus in you than a thousand with the devil in you. He's not depriving you from playing football, an healthy sport.

He wants you to grow in a man, in a woman. He's a liar. Oh lovely Jesus.

Blessed Savior. Worth shouting about. I don't think we're going to get anywhere with little titling sermons do you? Not with a war on.

Well, he prayed. Spread it before the Lord, that's the thing to do. When you're feeling downcast, when you feel you want to give up, spread it before the Lord.

When a few people are saying, come on, enjoy yourself, spread it before the Lord. When you find that there's something in your heart, somebody's wounded you, they do. If you love the kingdom, you'll get wounded alright.

Love always gets wounded, it's a costly business. But just spread it before the Lord. Get back the forgiveness in your heart.

Spread it before the Lord. When you don't feel like going out with the handles, spread it before the Lord. That's what he did.

And he prayed, his prayer, I can't go into it, it's not time, but I like his prayer. He humbled himself, sackcloth and ashes, rent his clothes, in the first verse. And he prayed, O Lord God of Israel, who dwellest between the cherubims, I'm not looking at Ezekiah, I'm not looking at his servants or his army, or what he's done, my eyes are not on the earth, I'm looking at God.

I'm looking at him that dwells between the cherubims, who made the heavens and the earth, who created with a word. I'm looking to the power of God. When you look there, you forget about the troubles and the problems.

There is no problems with God. He's got all the answers. We'll kill you, they say.

You can't, I've got eternal life. We'll stop you. You can't because God's with us.

Listen, he says, Thou art the God, even thou alone. Never mind all the heathen religions, never mind the witchcraft, never mind atheism and humanism. Thou art the God alone.

Stop looking at them. Don't learn a lot of text how to combat Jehovah's Witnesses, will you? You might become one if you do. You don't need text.

They'll twist it, they'll turn. You'll be fighting them against the wall. All you need is the power of God and if they're open, they'll come.

Thou alone of all the kingdoms of the earth, Thou has made heaven and earth. Lord, oh praise God, what a prayer. Bow down thine ear and hear.

Open thine eyes and see. Hear the words of Sennacherib. Look at them, Lord, which has reproached you.

Of a truth, Lord, they've done this, what they said. But theirs were only gods of stone, gods of wood. They spoke against you.

Now therefore, Lord our God, I beseech thee, save us out of their hand. That all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou alone. Lord, bring Manchester to you.

We're not looking at the difficulties, we're not looking at the heathen cults, we're not looking at the atheism or the humanism, we're not looking at the impossible task, we're not looking at the two and a half millions dead in cespases and sins, we're looking to you, the maker of the heavens and the earth. Lord, do it. They said we can't do it.

They say the church is a mouse. We're the mighty church of the living God. Lord, do it.

You don't have to pray like that, you'd get exhausted and you've got to work. I'm set aside for it, but pray anyway. Lord, do it.

Why? That the whole world today may know that you have captured Manchester. Is it impossible? I'd like to go on, but time's cut us off. I'll just close by saying this.

If you read the end of the chapter, you know how God dealt with it. He'll never guess, so I think you might. Oh, dear, dear.

Over 200,000. Now, what did God send? Michael? And all the angels? He sent one angel! Boy, that's... I'm excited about that. Or don't you believe in them? One angel.

One! One angel! And there's billions of them there in reserve. And you know what the one angel did? Ha, ha! Ha, ha! When they came next morning, they got out of their tents. And they said, we've got Israel where we want them to stay.

Go and wake them all up, sergeants. Wakey, wakey! What's gone wrong with them? Wakey, wakey! Come out and get out of bed, you lazy rascals. The sun's burning the back of the trees, you soldiers.

Get out of bed. I'll sort this one out. Corporal, where are they? Sergeant, where are they? Captain Major, where... Corpse.

Next tent, corpse. 185,000 corpses! One angel. When you pray, remember we've got angels.

Plural. On our side. And behind them, the almighty God.

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