

Remain Faithful to God

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of remaining faithful to God, learning from King Hezekiah's life and mistakes.

Duration: 1:11:05

Scripture: 2 Kings 18:5

Topics: "Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of staying faithful to God and not compromising with the world. He warns against forming friendships with the enemy, the devil, and urges the congregation to wake up from their spiritual slumber. The preacher highlights the consequences of disobedience and betrayal, using the example of the Israelites who were taken captive by the Babylonians. He also criticizes the selfishness of a king who only cared about his own well-being, disregarding the future of his children. The sermon concludes with a reminder that those who remain faithful to the end will inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Transcript

We'll read from 2nd Kings chapter 20 verse 14. Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, What did these men say, and from where have they come to you? And Hezekiah said, They have come from a far country, from Babylon. And He said to them, What have they seen in your house? So Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house.

There is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them. Stop reading there. When you are at home and you have a chance, then you can read the whole chapter.

I would like us to just have a look at King Hezekiah's story, the king of Judah. He was an amazing king. King Hezekiah said to him, In chapter 18 verse 5 and 6 we read, He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that after Him there was none like Him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before Him.

For He clung to the Lord, He did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments which the Lord had commanded Moses. And in verse 7 we also read, And the Lord was with him wherever he went, he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

King Hezekiah was an amazing king. It said that before him and after him there was no one who clung to the Lord as he did. But at the end of his life there was something which was a tragedy and which made the prophet of God sad.

And God Himself, which of course serves as a warning to us, That we should be faithful to the Lord right to the end and that we should be watchful at all times. Before speaking about the mistake he made, Which we of course need to also learn from, that we don't go and make the same mistakes that they have made. That's why it's been written that we can learn from it.

And back to where he, that he was faithful to the Lord. He was faithful to the Lord and trusted Him like no other king before or after him, following the law and the commandments God had given through Moses and following in his father David's footsteps, even though he was not his direct child but a descendant. He was a person who had clung to the Lord, stayed in close fellowship with Him and everyone knew it.

He was known for it that he was one who lived close to the Lord. His life had been amazing. We people always tend to be influenced by things that have happened in the past.

And often we also take after our parents. And we tend to keep also their traditions or what they've taught us, be they good or bad. But Hezekiah was not such a person.

Hezekiah's father Hezekiah's father had been the one who had given the instruction that the entrance, the door to the temple should be nailed closed, sealed off totally and said no one is allowed to go and pray anymore. It's not just now in these days that people have started ruling out prayer. Hezekiah's father had already instructed that the temple be closed, that no one was allowed to go and worship or pray.

But when Hezekiah came to power, But when Hezekiah came to power, He started off by saying, go and open up the temple, get that door opened again and the temple cleaned out and prepared that people can go and worship and pray again. That's not an easy thing, it's difficult. It's not easy to turn the tide.

Even President Bush has experienced it, where he tries and has tried to turn things around, things that have been passed in the previous dispensation, laws which had been passed. But when Hezekiah came to power, To change abortion laws, try to turn things around again, where people have made it the norm to say that a woman has the right over her own body to do what she likes. That child is not even taken into consideration, it can be slaughtered.

Try and turn it around, it's not an easy thing. And so Hezekiah also experienced that, to change what his father had implemented was difficult. One can only love such a person and honour a child that is even prepared to go against what God has ordained.

His own father had implemented that which he had implemented which was against and contrary to God's word. He went and he closed the Lord's house, that was nailed closed. But outside there were other temples, other altars that were being built for foreign, for heathen gods.

So Hezekiah's father had closed God's house where he was worshipped. And he had built other altars, other temples for foreign gods, that which was an abomination to God. And his son came and he destroyed those foreign altars and temples.

And King Hezekiah had great wisdom and also discernment, not like today where you hardly find any discernment anymore. Where people all just flock to a thing without even discerning whether it's good or

bad, like flies into a teacup. In that time of Hezekiah that bronze serpent which Moses had made was still there, had been put away.

During the time of Moses when the people had been healed, when that serpent had been erected, after that they put it away carefully. But then Hezekiah noticed that the people were coming and worshipping the serpent. Hezekiah noticed that the people were coming and worshipping the serpent.

Hezekiah said that bronze serpent should be destroyed. And people were amazed and said, but how is such a thing possible? How can you do such a thing? This is such a valuable thing. It's almost holy because that's what healed the people in that time.

But Hezekiah said it must be destroyed. Why? Because that bronze serpent was a symbol of Christ, of that which was to come. But people were not being pointed to Christ through it, but they were worshipping that serpent itself.

And the Lord had said that as a serpent was lifted up in the wilderness and all who looked up to it were healed, so the Son of Man had to be lifted up on the cross. And all who would turn their eyes on Him, they would be healed and find salvation. So that bronze serpent was a sign of things to come.

But people weren't looking at Christ because of it, but they were rather worshipping that serpent itself. And the Lord had said, but how is such a thing possible? How can you do such a thing? And people were amazed and said, but how is such a thing possible? How can you do such a thing? So this young man had to sit on the throne of his father who had implemented all these evil things. He who had closed God's house down, said people shouldn't worship God anymore, shouldn't pray to Him.

But the Son came and He opened up the doors of the temple again that people once again could worship God. And He destroyed that serpent which had misled so many. God had said he would open up the gates to the House of the Lord.

The Passover had been a very important feast and occasion on the calendar in that time, Remembering how God had brought salvation to the nation, but in that time it was taken off the calendar. The kings before Hezekiah had said that should no longer be celebrated, the Passover. And it reminds me of today's times where even Ascension Day is no longer remembered.

I wonder what you as Christians are doing about it. I wonder if If Hezekiah's father and Hezekiah had to be two candidates standing for election today, who would you elect? Who would you vote for? Yes, obviously in a democracy you're free to choose. You can elect whom you want.

Vote for whom you like. But remember what the result is of your choosing. And if things go wrong, because you've chosen the wrong one, it will have been your own doing.

If I don't speak these things, then it would be better that my lips turn to mud, for I'd be like a dog that cannot bark when danger comes. A few years ago I said, well, even if I would be called a dog, and if people would refer to me as a dog, you don't kill your dog. Even if you have a kennel, you put it in there and you actually even feed it.

Look after it. Allow me to speak the truth. For I still have to give account.

And I don't want to be held accountable for your blood because I didn't tell you the truth. So you can go back, read in the 18th, 19th, and even 20th chapter, read about this King Hezekiah, and look at the cross-references, and how many other places in the Bible it is referred to him, and even songs written about him. But now because of time, I want to get to this point now, where he made that mistake, where he, so to say, slipped.

The Assyrians had attacked him. Other kings had banded around him and said, look, if you're on your own, you'll never make it, but if we all fight together, stand together, we will be victorious. Hezekiah was a man of prayer.

He went on his knees and he said, Oh Lord, what must I do? I don't trust in the arm of the flesh. I don't trust in these other nations, and even heathen nations. Lord, I trust you.

What should I do? And God honored him, and gave him the victory, and he was victorious, because he trusted in God. And then he became ill, to the point of death. And Isaiah was sent by God to the king.

Isaiah himself was of the royal family. So we don't know whether he had free access to the palace because of his royalty. So God sent Isaiah to King Hezekiah and said, Go and tell the king that he must get his house in order, for he is going to die.

He will not be healed from this sickness. So Isaiah went to the king and told him. And when the king heard these words from the prophet, he turned his face to the wall.

Not like Ahab who turned his back on God. No, he just turned his face to the wall, that he would not be distracted by anyone else in the room, but that he could be alone with God. And Hezekiah cried to the king.

His heart broke. And the king cried and he said, Oh Lord, remember me. Even how in my youth I served you and walked in truth before you with a whole heart.

Isaiah had started leaving the palace, but before he left, got out of the palace itself. He hadn't even got out yet. He was still half way through.

When the Lord answered Hezekiah's prayer, and spoke to his Isaiah and said, Go back, return to Hezekiah. And tell him that I've heard his cry. Tell him that I will add another 15 years to his life.

He had already reigned 14 years, so with the 15 years added, it made it 29. And so God heard Hezekiah's prayer. His prayer was not just one that got as far as the ceiling, but his prayer touched God's heart.

It moved God himself. So God had said to Hezekiah, Set your house in order. Make sure everything is put right.

Many theologians say that that was not something which pertained to him personally. For his life had been put right. But God said to Hezekiah, Go back to your house.

And tell him that I've heard his cry. And tell him that I will add another 15 years to his life. And tell him that I will add another 15 years to his life.

The problem was that Hezekiah did not have a son. And as you know, with royalty, it runs in the family, in the blood. You cannot just take anybody and make him a king.

A king is born. It's in his blood. You can't just give anyone a royal robe and say, Okay, now you will be king.

It's like if someone would come to me and say, Okay, we're going to make you king now. We'll give you a robe and you'll be king. That doesn't make me a king.

So the Lord was preparing him, giving him an opportunity to set things right. That what he had implemented and started, that there would be continuation. That it wouldn't just come to an end what he had done, but that it would continue.

He had been a reformer. He had turned people back to God, to worship Him, to pray to Him. But God said, Well, you've done all that, but now it needs to continue even after you die.

That was his weakness. So that had been his weakness, that he had just lived for the day and for the present. He hadn't planned ahead for the future, that that what he had started would continue.

And so God said, Set your house in order. Get things organized and set for the future. For it would have been said that he would die and then all that he had implemented, that that would die with him.

And then someone like his father would again take the throne and go back to the old things again. So he cried to God. Why let him impend to look on and love? In your words, you're thunderous.

He could pray. He prayed a prayer that touched God, that moved God. It went all the way to God's heart.

Can you pray in such a way, you young people, you older people? Can you pray in such a way that God hears it? Or when you pray, you're just shouting, Amen, Hallelujah, while you're praying. Your neighbor hears it, but does God hear it? No, no, no. Can you parents pray? Have you noticed where your children are? How they have been swallowed by the world from head to toe, that they are totally in the world.

And even if they can't get to the disco, they'll bring the disco into the church. Tell me parents, have you prayed? Can you pray that God will save your children? And so Hezekiah prayed. And the Lord answered and said he would be healed.

And within three days he was healed. He was perfectly healthy and could go up to the temple to pray and worship. And Isaiah the prophet said, O King, God will give you a sign as proof that He has spoken this.

And he said, King, you can choose what sign you would like God to give you. And the prophet said, what should the Lord do as a sign? Should the shadow move forward or backwards ten steps or ten degrees? And the king said, well, it's maybe easy or easier for the sun to move forward by ten degrees. But to make the sun move backwards ten degrees, that's far more difficult.

And the Lord said, King, you can choose what sign you would like God to give you. And so it happened that Isaiah the prophet cried to the Lord. And it happened that the sun moved back by ten degrees.

They could see it on their sun clock how the shadow changed as they watched. And the king realized then that surely God would heal him. And then he lived another fifteen years.

But here is the heartbreaking part. After three years, a son was born to him. His name was Manasseh.

He took over the throne after his father passed away. He was twelve years when he became king. So he must have been born three years after the king had been healed.

But when you are in God's house, he has a paper. A man knows. And so it was, after the king had been healed, and things were going well with him, everything was back to normal, that the king of Babylon sent a delegation, some ambassadors, to represent him.

He sent them to King Hezekiah to say, Well, king, we've heard how the Lord has done something amazing for you. And they came with gifts to see him. They came and said, Well, we've heard, oh king, how ill you have been and how you have been healed.

So Hezekiah invited them in, gave them to eat. And thereafter, he took them on a tour of his palace. He showed them everything, his silver, his gold, and even all his military equipment.

Everything he had, he showed them the lot. There is nothing in his kingdom which he did not show them. He did it in a haughty way, to show off what he had.

And then the delegation left. And then God spoke to Isaiah the prophet, and he said, Isaiah, go to King Hezekiah. Ask them where that delegation had come from.

And what they wanted. And what you did for them. And what you did for them.

Now one could say, but what was wrong with what he did? What is wrong with showing them around? And God said, no, you go and ask them. What have you shown them? Who were they? What have you done? And that was this king's downfall. And God said, oh, go and ask the prophet.

And he said, but what is wrong with what you have shown them? What have you shown them? What is wrong with what you have done? What have you shown them? And he said, but what is wrong with what you have shown them?

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