

Roots of Revival

by Mark Greening

God tests our trust to drive us to humility and prayer, and He promises to deliver us when we humble ourselves and seek Him.

Duration: 28:20

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:10

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of relying on God's spirit rather than our own strength and power. He highlights how trials and problems are God's way of getting our attention and reminding us of our need for Him. The preacher references the story of Moses humbling himself before God and how God intervened and delivered him. He also mentions the promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God promises to hear and forgive His people if they humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways. The sermon concludes with a call to seek the Lord and rely on His power to bring about change in our lives.

Transcript

We continue our series on the topic of revival in the kings, and on the front page you see revival through the king of Jehoshaphat, but today I'm going to be pinch-hitting with revival through the life of Hezekiah, and in a few moments we'll be turning to the book of 2 Kings, chapter 18. But I want to ask a question this morning, and that is, when you're in trouble, what is your first inclination? The world's view is, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. But for the Christian, when the going gets tough, the humble start praying.

In Zechariah 4, 6 we read, It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord. You know, there's a part of us that wants to take control. Wants to take control of our lives, and the matters around us, and our own destiny, but God won't allow that for His child.

Have you ever noticed that just when we're starting to cruise down the road of life, and everything seems good, and we're being blessed, that all of a sudden, trials and problems are sent our way? These are God's ways of getting our attention, and showing us that we need Him. That we need to trust in Him, and go to Him. To begin singing in our hearts, I need Thee every hour.

And to be driven to our knees in utter abandonment, and pray, God, if you don't help me, I'm doomed. There has never been a revival or a revived Christian that did not approach God in this way. As a matter of fact, this is to be the tone of our daily Christian walk.

Now, anyone can say that they trust in the Lord, that's easy. But God will always test that trust, no matter how mature we are, no matter how long we've been Christians, He'll test us. And right now, some of you are going through tremendous times of testing.

They may be financial. They may be emotional. They may be relational.

They may be pressures from work. It may be a sense of uncertainty as to the future. It may be health issues.

It may have to do with people close to you who are causing you much pain. And all of these things God allows to bring us to Himself. And seldom, as we have learned in life, do these things go away on their own.

And human logic, ingenuity, wisdom, and manipulation often fail. Because God says, without Me, you can do nothing. And these come out, not except by prayer.

And when God tests us like this, the only way to victory, the only way out is by humbling ourselves and praying. This morning I want to look at the life of Hezekiah and how God revived him and spared a whole nation as a result of his humility in prayer. And there's an application for every one of us here this morning from his life.

If you have your Bibles, if you would turn to 2 Kings 18, beginning in verse 5, we read these words, Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like Him among all the kings of Judah, either before Him or after Him. He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow Him.

He kept the commands the Lord had given Moses, and the Lord was with him. He was successful in whatever he undertook. Well, so far, so good, right? I mean, he trusted in the Lord.

God blessed him. God was with him. Hezekiah was successful.

And then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, God tests him. We pick up the story in verses 17 to 35 of 2 Kings 18. I've abridged the text.

I've skipped some verses so that we can have the core of the story this morning. For sake of time, I'm going to read through these verses. Verses 17, we read, The king of Assyria, there's God's test.

The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer, and his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They called for the king and Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna, the secretary, and Joah, son of Asaph, the recorder, went out to them. The field commander said to them, Tell Hezekiah, this is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says.

On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have strategy and military strength, but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending that you rebel against me? And if you say we are depending on the Lord our God, isn't he the one whose highest places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, you must worship before this altar in Jerusalem? And down in verse 28, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. This is what the king says.

Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do 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. Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, The Lord will deliver us. Has the God of any nation ever delivered His land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save His land from me? How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand? Now folks, this is a desperate situation.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, the most powerful nation at the time, laid siege to Jerusalem and it was only a matter of time before Jerusalem was destroyed. And how could this be? Hezekiah was a godly man, an obedient man, yet God allowed this terrible situation to come into his life. Just as He has allowed those situations to come into some of your lives and your lives who are not experiencing them now, they will.

He will allow these things to come into our lives simply so that He can test our trust and drive us to Him. And so in our text this morning, the Lord gives us a three-part process that we're to follow daily. And as we go through life, and that we're to encourage others to follow when we come into these times of testing.

First, we're to humble ourselves. Then we're to pray. Then we're to wait on the Lord for His answers.

Notice how Hezekiah responded in chapter 19, verse 1. He humbled himself. That's step one. When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord.

Tearing one's clothing and putting on sackcloth was the outward sign back then of inward humility and brokenness before God. And that is always the Lord's starting place in your life and my life. We must humble ourselves before Him.

But what does it mean to humble ourselves before God? The act of humbling ourselves is the act and a condition of coming to an end of ourselves and our own resources. It's having to reach up to touch bottom. It's the sense that if God does not intervene, we ourselves, our situation, possibly those around us are ruined.

It is the knowledge that we have been placed in an impossible situation and but by the grace of God, we will be utterly crushed and destroyed. Have you ever been there? Is this not what Moses felt in Numbers chapter 16 when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram along with 250 well-known leaders in Israel, they came to oppose Moses' leadership? They had talked previously about stoning him. He didn't know what faced him in that meeting with all of these people coming against him.

And what did he do? He defended himself and reminded the people that he was a jolly good fellow. He took out a 30 minute time slot on national TV to talk about all he'd accomplished. No, he humbled himself.

We read in Numbers 16.22, But Moses fell face down and cried out, O God, God of the spirits of all mankind. He humbled himself before God in front of the people. And God intervened and dealt with all of those who came against him.

And He delivered him because Moses humbled himself and prayed. When Saul was pursuing David to kill him, the Lord delivered David time and time again in describing these events and God's intervention. In Psalm 18.27, David said these words, You save the humble, but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.

Even Ahab. The most wicked king, Scripture says, who ever lived, who did much evil, urged on by his wife Jezebel, there had never been a king like him who did evil. Even King Ahab, when God had pronounced judgment on him through the prophet, when he heard that judgment, he humbled himself.

And God picks up the story in 1 Kings 21-29 and God said these words, Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? And because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day. It almost sounds like God is surprised. He says, have you noticed how even Ahab has humbled himself? And I dare say there's not one of us here this morning who has sinned to the extent that Ahab has.

And Satan is telling some of you that you cannot be forgiven. You cannot be freed. There is no way out.

And God says, if you will humble yourself and pray, I will deliver you. What is troubling you today? God has made a promise to us in His Word. One of the many if you will, I will promises.

There's many of these in Scripture. If you do this, then I will do that. If you don't do this, I won't do that.

But here is an if you will, I will promise in Scripture that we come to today. It's what Stephen Hawkins preached on a few weeks ago in 2 Chronicles 7.14. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be opened and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place here at Oak Ridge and in your homes and in your quiet time.

If you will, I will. Let God be true in every man a liar. Other people promise you things and they fail.

God says, if you will, I will. This is the first step toward God intervening in our lives and comforting us with His divine presence. It's to humble ourselves.

Oh, how often we want to run to someone else for help. And you know in the abundance of counselors, there's wisdom. But you know one of the roles and responsibilities of any of us who listen to people's problems is to point them to Jesus.

To point them to the throne of grace where they can obtain mercy and find grace to help in their time of need. Scripture says in Jeremiah, cursed is the man who trusts in man and whose heart turns away from the living God. And so when we humble ourselves, listen to what God promises you and me this morning.

In Isaiah 57.15, for this is what the high and lofty One says, He who lives forever, whose name is holy, I live in a high and holy place, but also with Him who is contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite. God promises to be with you this week. Have you experienced the presence of Jesus in your life? The presence of God Almighty, the power of the Holy Spirit tangibly felt around you as you humble yourself before God? He will make that real.

And He will be a friend that's closer than a brother to you. Someone may ask, well, if I don't humble myself because God commands us to humble ourselves, then what? Well, if I'm unwilling to humble myself before God, then the problem is pride. It's pride because pride is the opposite of humility.

And the problem with pride is that it's tasteless and odorless and it anesthetizes its victims so they don't see it coming. C.S. Lewis said this about pride. He said, Pride is the sin which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else and of which hardly any people ever imagine they are guilty of themselves.

Pride is purely spiritual and thus it is more subtle and deadly because it is not something tangible you can see and lay your hand on. Donald Gray Barnhouse, when he used to preach, often would say to his congregation, there's not one of us here this morning that will think of themselves as highly five years from now as they do today. You know, when we think of pride, we often think of blatant arrogance or a haughty look as Scripture sometimes describes it.

But one of the simplest definitions and descriptions of pride is that pride causes tension and frustration in relationships and in the church. In Proverbs 13:10 we read, By pride comes nothing but strife. How do we know where there's pride? Strife.

How do we know if the prideful person has been involved in something? There's contention. There's the vision. There's strife.

Pride loves to pick a fight. It loves a good argument. It is critical.

It loves its own way and thrives on its own opinions. Pride loves to be seen, complimented, and cajoled. A prideful person creates a walk on eggshells atmosphere in the home, church, and at work.

A prideful person is unapproachable. Unteachable. Easily offended.

And will seldom receive an exhortation or a suggestion. One man convicted of his pride in a service of a friend I know stood up and said this. He said, I wasn't always right, but I was never wrong.

Consequently, a prideful person cannot be led by the Holy Spirit because the proud in heart will not pray. In Psalm 10, verse 4, we read in his pride, the wicked does not seek him. In all his thoughts, there is no room for God.

And I might add, if a proud Christian prays, that proud Christian is not praying to God. He or she is only praying to themselves. You say, what do you mean praying to themselves? When we pray, we pray to God.

Do you know what Jesus said in Luke 18, verse 11, concerning a proud prayer? The Pharisees stood up and prayed to Himself, Jesus said. God, I thank You that I'm not like other men. And if I come before the Lord in prayer, and I have a burden that I want Him to remove, I want Him to change people.

Hudson Taylor used to say, it's possible to change men through God by prayer alone. And I have this terrible situation that is upon me, and I get on my knees, and I think I'm humbling myself, and I pray, and God says, if you have pride in your heart, Mark, you know what? You're praying to Mark Almighty and not God Almighty. And by the way, Mark isn't Almighty.

We pray to ourselves, brothers and sisters, if there's pride in our heart and we look down on others. We pray to ourselves if we cannot receive exhortation and correction in the gifts of those around us, we're proud. Someone might say, well, what's wrong with just a little pride in my life? Well, what does God say about pride? I just want to focus quickly on 14 things.

If you want this list, I'll email it to you. There's actually 29 statements on pride in Scripture that I've found, but I want to highlight 14 of these. First, God says in Proverbs 21:4 that pride is sin.

Therefore, God knows the proud from afar. That's Psalm 138:6. And that the proud in heart are an abomination to Him. Proverbs 16:5 Because pride is as the sin of witchcraft.

1 Samuel 15.23 Satan loves to make us proud because the proud stir up strife. Proverbs 28.25 And they cause contention. Proverbs 13.10 And ultimately, Satan knows that pride will cause a man's downfall.

Proverbs 18.12 Therefore, God says God is against the proud in Jeremiah 50.31 because the proud are cursed in Psalm 119.21 and the proud are under the wrath of God in 2 Chronicles 32.25 And because of this, there is no grace for the proud in James 4.6 because God will not endure the proud. Psalm 101.5 Therefore, the Lord has a day of punishment in store for the proud. Isaiah 2.12 And God sets Himself in battle against the proud in 1 Peter 5.5 What do we think God thinks of pride? We say, that's talking about the unbelievers.

Listen. God loves you and me so much. Just like we love our children so much.

That God says, whom the Lord loves, He disciplines. And if He sees that sin in His own child, He will be so quickly, He'll slap them down like He did to David. He will rebuke and exhort the kings as we'll read later on next week as we look at another king.

He will do this because we are His child. You know, many times when Virginia and I were out with our boys, we used to be in restaurants or be around and we'd see other kids and they would just be hanging off the ceiling, so to speak. Hanging off the drapes.

One kid I actually saw pull down the drapes in this establishment and the parents did nothing. I couldn't believe it. And I'm there, but what do I do? I don't do anything.

Why? He's not my child. But for my children, they can attest to the fact that Dad's love. Discipline them.

And there is no difference if there is pride in my heart or our hearts this morning. God will discipline us. Is it any wonder God cannot bless a proud person? 1 Peter 5.5 says that God, we read the word opposes the proud.

The Greek word literally means to set yourself in battle against. It was a military term. That when we are proud and we will not listen, God says now I'm going to put on my greaves, I'm going to put on my armor, and I'm going to come and battle against you.

Now having humbled Himself, what was Hezekiah's next step? Because all of us, brothers and sisters, need God's grace. We need His divine enablement. We need His answers to our prayers.

We need His blessing in our lives. And so in 2 Kings 18.10, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, sent this letter through his field commander to Hezekiah. In verse 10 we read, Do not let the God you depend on deceive you when He says, Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.

Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them? Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord.

And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, O Lord, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. And you made heaven and earth. Give ear, O Lord, and hear.

Open your eyes, O Lord, and see. Listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. It is true, O Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands.

They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone fashioned by men's hands. Now, O Lord, our God, deliver us from His hand so that all the kingdoms on earth may know that You alone, O Lord, are God. When we are confronted by these troubling situations, God says we're to pray.

Just as Hezekiah prayed, get alone with Him and come before Him and present the situation that we have no answer to and we pray. Philippians 4.6, it says, Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God and the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Prayer is not everything, but everything is by prayer.

Is this not what Jesus meant in Luke 18.1 where He said men ought always to pray and not to lose heart? Why are we to pray? Because our God is powerful. He can change any troubling situation no matter how bleak, how ominous, how depressing, how unmanageable. If only we will come before Him in believing prayer.

Jeremiah 32.27 says, I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? What's bothering you this morning? What keeps you awake at night? Is the thing that troubles you this morning more impossible a situation than 185,000 Assyrian soldiers dressed for battle coming against you to murder and rob you? How did Hezekiah respond? And how did God, rather, respond to Hezekiah's humility in prayer? In 2 Kings 18.20 we read, Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent a message to Hezekiah. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says.

I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Therefore, this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria. 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. By the way that he came, he will return. He will not enter this city, declares the Lord.

I will defend this city and save it for my sake and for the sake of my servant David. And that night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. And when the people got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies.

So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, broke camp and withdrew. If you will, I will. God is a God of the impossible.

And you know, sometimes our pride, many times this has been my pride, I try to solve it on my own. I try to think my way through it and theologize my way through it. God says, without me you can do nothing.

You can't get out of this one. An unsaved person might get out of this one. They might think their way through it, but I'm going to thwart your plans until you come to me.

You humble yourself before me. Psalm 118.8 says, It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. This morning we have impossible situations.

We have impossible emotions, maybe even pride. Maybe the Holy Spirit has spoken to us about pride in different areas. We can't change on our own.

We need the power of God to do this. We come and we humble ourselves. We pray and we look to the Lord.

We go to the throne of grace asking that God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, would come and intervene in our lives and change us for the honor and glory of His name. Jesus said, If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Today, will we go home and seek the Lord while He may be found? Might we call upon Him while He is near? And He says, I will answer you.

If you will, I will. Let's pray as the worship team comes forward. Heavenly Father, we come to You this morning.

You are God of heaven and earth. You are Creator of all things and all mankind. You are sovereign over the affairs of men.

Before a word is on our lips, You know it. Before one of our days came to be, You wrote them in Your book. And so You know all about us.

And I pray, O God, that today You would draw us to Yourself, that we would humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that You might lift us up in due time. We thank You for Your promises. Lord, we come to You.

We don't look to man. We don't look to the wisdom of others. We look to You.

And we pray that this day would be a day of freedom for many. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

As the worship team leads us in a closing song, I'd ask us all to stand now as we sing. And we're about to go into our time of communion. If for any reason...

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18820.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mark-greening/roots-of-revival/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net