

## “Hezekiah’s Prayer”

**Background Scripture:** 2 Kings 19:1-34 **Devotional Reading:** Romans 8:29-39

### 2 Kings 19:14–20, 29–31 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Give ear, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

<sup>17</sup> “It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.”

<sup>20</sup> 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.”

<sup>29</sup> “This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: “This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>30</sup> Once more a remnant of the kingdom of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. <sup>31</sup> For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. “The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

## LESSON AIMS

- **Learning Fact:** To explain the historical circumstance behind Hezekiah’s prayer.
- **Biblical Principle:** To pray with the desire that God’s will be done.
- **Daily Application:** To create a plan to respond to crisis with immediate prayer to the Lord.

## INTRODUCTION

“Spare Tire” Prayer Life? Have you ever heard of a “spare tire” prayer life? A person with such a prayer life uses prayer just as people use spare tires—only in emergencies.

The *how*, *when*, and *why* of a Christian’s prayers constitute a major indicator of his or her spiritual maturity. A spiritually healthy individual has a regular (daily) practice of prayer that draws heavily on Scripture. Such a prayer life begins by listening to God through His written Word. The spiritually mature Christian realizes that prayer is less about talking and more about listening to what God has already said. There’s no sense in seeking God’s approval on, say, an adulterous relationship since God has already said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14; compare Matthew 5:27–30).

God will not answer certain types of prayers in a positive way—or even at all (examples: Psalm 18:41; James 4:3). We must ask according to His will (1 John 5:14–15). As in the current lesson, these facts apply to times of crisis as well.

## LESSON CONTEXT

The reign of godly King Hezekiah (716–687 B.C.) over the southern kingdom of Judah (capital city Jerusalem) was a time of trouble. Previously, in 722 B.C., the Assyrian Empire had annexed the northern kingdom of Israel along with areas to the north and east of it. In 702 B.C., the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib invaded Judah, destroyed the major city of Lachish, and besieged Jerusalem itself (the two cities being about 30 miles apart). Jerusalem survived only after Hezekiah agreed to pay tribute to the Assyrian king (2 Kings 18:13–19:13; 2 Chronicles 32:1–19; Isaiah 36:1–37:13).

The account in the printed text also appears in Isaiah 37, almost word for word. This double placement reflects the close relationship between the king and the prophet, which appears in the story itself.

The text under consideration reports a conversation between Hezekiah and God, with the prophet Isaiah as the go-between. In 2 Kings 19:1–5, the king sent messengers to the prophet asking for his help communicating with God.

Isaiah's answer promised that God would create a distraction to the Assyrians (19:6–7). The blasphemous and arrogant statements by the Assyrians did not help their cause (19:8–13)!

Texts that are parallel to those in the lesson are Isaiah 37:14–20, 30–32, and 2 Chronicles 32:20. On the godly character of King Hezekiah, see 2 Kings 18:1–8.

### **Hezekiah's Prayer: 2 Kings 19:14–19**

The contents of *the letter* that king *Hezekiah received* are found in 2 Kings 19:10–13 (three verses prior to today's lesson). The letter's contents are threatening, and the hostile sender was king Sennacherib of Assyria.

The first thing king Hezekiah did after reading the letter was to look beyond his own throne and the throne of the "great king" Sennacherib and focused his attention on the throne of God who was "enthroned between the cherubim" (19:15; 37:14; Psalm 80:1; 99:1).

King Hezekiah went up into the temple of the Lord and spread the letter before the Lord. His prayer included four points: 1st, he recognized God's sovereignty, and that He had complete authority over what He had created. Not only is the Lord the King of Israel and the King of all nations, but He is the creator of the heavens and the earth (v. 15). 2<sup>nd</sup>, the pagan Sennacherib had defied (mocked) the living and sovereign God (v. 16, and 2 Kings 18:35). 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sennacherib had indeed destroyed the other nations and other gods, "for they were not gods" (vs. 17-18), and 4<sup>th</sup>, king Hezekiah requested that God save His people and show the world that Jehovah was the only God!

This is a good example to follow when we pray about life's problems. When we focus on the Lord and see how great He is, it helps to put our problems in perspective.

### **What Do You Think #1?**

What prevents you from going to God in prayer when you receive disturbing communications?

### **Digging Deeper**

What first step could you take to make this a habit?

### **What Do You Think #2?**

Is God's glory diminished if He does not choose to deliver you from difficult situations? Explain your answer.

### **Digging Deeper**

How can you give God glory in situations from which you have not experienced the relief of deliverance?

### **God's Response: 2 Kings 19:20, 29–31**

God had *heard* Hezekiah's prayer (v. 20), and His answer is recorded in verses 21-34. For God to "hear" also implies a willingness to "heed."

The material in the eight verses following verse 20 (not in today's lesson) is a full response to Hezekiah's request and is directed to Sennacherib. Here the Lord told Isaiah that He had used Assyria to chasten the northern kingdom of Israel, and the Lord had given Sennacherib victory over other nations, but the Assyrian king had never given God the glory. In fact, his field commander had reproached the name of the Lord (19:4, 16, 22) and blasphemed the God of Israel. But "the Virgin Daughter Zion"—the city of Jerusalem—would toss her head in disdain and laugh at the defeat of Assyria. The Lord used the image of a virgin because the Assyrians would not be able to take the city and violate it the way pagan soldiers did to women taken captive. But the Lord would treat the Assyrians like cattle and put hooks in their noses and lead them, throwing Sennacherib's boasts of conquest back in his face.

## 2. What was God's response to Hezekiah? (2 Kings 19:20)

While momentarily under siege Sennacherib had devastated Judah's crops for that year. The Assyrians were adept at siege warfare (2 Kings 17:5), and they had their eyes on the capital city of Jerusalem next. This siege tactic led to the destruction of vineyards, orchards, etc. So for the first two years they would eat what "grows by itself." But by the third year they would return to normal agriculture over time.

These first two years would require faith for their food. Faith requires long-term thinking.

As the performance of this promise was to be after the destruction of Sennacherib's army, it was a sign to Hezekiah's faith, assuring him of that present deliverance, as an earnest of the Lord's future care of the kingdom of Judah. This the Lord would perform, not for their righteousness, but His own glory.

## 3. What would be sign of God's promise? (2 Kings 19:29)

God promised that He would deliver His "remnant" (a small part that remains) from their enemies and they would "take root" and become fruitful again. Not only would Sennacherib never enter the city of Jerusalem, but he wouldn't even shoot an arrow at it, attack it, or build a siege mound next to it! (v. 32, not in today's text). In one night, God's angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers and that put an end to the planned siege of Jerusalem (v. 35).

Some students have seen a relationship between this prophecy (v. 31), and Psalm 126. The psalm speaks of a dramatic and sudden deliverance for Jerusalem, which certainly wasn't the case at the end of the Babylonian captivity. Could this have been Jerusalem's deliverance from the Assyrian army, when God killed the 185,000 soldiers? If so, the prayer in Psalm 126 would certainly be applicable.

## 4. What did God mean by "remnant" (2 Kings 19:30-31)?

### CONCLUSION

#### ACTS in Action

This account reveals a faithful leader seeking God's help on behalf of an entire nation during a time of great crisis. This aspect of spiritual leadership remains relevant. Asking for God's help is still an important part of such leadership. The threat may come from many directions, but it often comes from those who aspire to control others involuntarily. The leader must be alert to such a danger and align the people's hopes with God's desires, as Hezekiah did.

One way to do this is via the ACTS method of prayer. This acronym speaks to a four-stage prayer pattern:

- **Adoration:** Recognizing God for who He is;
- **Confession:** Admitting one's sins;
- **Thanksgiving:** Expressing gratitude for God's blessings already received;
- **Supplication:** Requesting God's intervention or blessings.

This pattern, with various emphases, is seen in Hezekiah's prayer. Such prayers often come naturally to people who believe God can help them in crisis, assuming that God has no reason to dismiss such prayers (contrast Lamentations 3:8, 44; Ezekiel 8:18; 1 Peter 3:7). Indeed, in the lesson text, God answered promptly and positively.

### PRAYER

Heavenly Father, may we pray with the right motives and priorities, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Pray with one desire: that God's will be done.