

## King Hezekiah Sermon 5th February 2017

We can read about King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32 and Isaiah 36-39. As you read these accounts you'll find that Hezekiah was one of the good kings of Judah. He was twenty five when he began his reign and ruled for 29 years.

What do we learn about Hezekiah as we start to read about him in 2 Kings 18? Rather than follow the example set by his father King Ahaz who had turned his back on God and closed the Lord's temple and set up altars to false gods on every street corner of Jerusalem and in every town he set up high places to offer burnt offerings to other gods and God turned His wrath on Judah as a consequence, rather Hezekiah chose to trust in God. We are told in 2 Kings 18 that "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord just as his father David had done.

We learn that he was not only a man after God's heart but he was also a man of actions as well as words. He led his people by example and to show he was not messing about with his trust and faith in God to deliver their nation he set about removing all of the shrines and symbols to other gods that his father had allowed to be set up in Jerusalem and throughout Judah. The first thing he did was remove the high places and smashed the so called sacred stones, cut down all the Asherah poles. Smashed Moses bronze snake which the Israelites had been worshipping.

We are told that he trusted in the Lord totally and there was no other king like him in Judah either before or since. He held fast to the Lord's teachings and the Lord was with him. He became successful in all that he undertook because the Lord was with him. Again he not only spoke the words but took action as well. Having destroyed all the idol worshipping symbols from Judah he then set about restoring the things of God to their rightful places.

We read in 2 Chronicles 29-30 how Hezekiah restored the temple worship which his father had abandoned and purified the temple to make it fit to receive their worship and praise to God. He also restored the observance of the Passover which had been abandoned by his father. All of these things he did because he read the word of God as given to Moses and followed it.

Perhaps today we need to return to the word of God rather than following the teachings of men in order to restore the church of God to its rightful place not only in our country but throughout the world. Perhaps as Hezekiah rather than just speaking out the word of God we need to be doers of the word as well?:

1 Peter 1 22-23 tells us:

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God."

The living and enduring word of God. God's word is just as relevant today as it ever was and if we are to see restoration in our land as Hezekiah did then we need to get back to it, to examine it closely and to follow it in order to restore God's favour upon His people and this land. Do we trust God to hear our prayers and our hearts and to act upon them as we shall see Hezekiah did shortly in what seemed impossible situations in the world's eye or are we still trying to sort it out in our own strength?

As I've said Hezekiah was also a man of prayer. When things got really bad Hezekiah turned to the Lord in prayer. He, as I'm sure we have, tried to sort it out his own way first but when it really came down to it he turned to God who in His grace and mercy and seeing Hezekiah's heart sorted it out for this man of God. How much easier would it have been if Hezekiah's first port of call had been to turn to the Father, how much easier would it be for each of us if we were to do the same thing when we meet problems rather than trying to wrestle them ourselves.?

we read in 2 Kings 18 that the King of Assyria came against Israel in Hezekiah's 14th year.

Hezekiah initially tried to pay the king off with tributes but Sennacherib took the tributes and then all the fortified cities around Jerusalem and finally stood with his army before Jerusalem itself.

Sennacherib then made his fatal error, he demanded that they stop worshipping Yahweh, God and worship his gods instead. Hezekiah would have perhaps agreed to some different demand to appease him but he would not countenance this he was too deeply rooted in his trust and faith in God and took the letter containing Sennacherib's demands into the temple and laid it before the Lord and prayed for Him to deliver them from this massive army. Isaiah then sent a message to Hezekiah that the Lord had told him that he had heard Hezekiah's prayer and would deliver them and subsequently God sent an angel into Sennacherib's camp who killed 185,000 men. When Sennacherib saw this the next morning Sennacherib broke camp and returned to Nineveh having seen the power of Hezekiah's God at work.

Hezekiah was also taken seriously ill but prayed to the Lord and pleaded for more time in view of his faithfulness and devotion to the Lord. The Lord heard his prayer and extended his life by 15 years.

From these two examples we can see that prayer can change things if they are in God's will to do. In human terms the Assyrian army should have slaughtered the people of Jerusalem but God saw their heart and their trust and delivered them He also saw Hezekiah's heart and answered his prayer for his life. If we were to bring our petitions before God from the depths of our hearts maybe He would hear them as well and act on them according to His will and our world might just be changed as well?

Finally, despite Hezekiah's Godly living and trust in the Lord he was also human and as so many of us do he gave in to the sin of pride. After Sennacherib's defeat he received envoys from Babylon and took delight in showing them all of the wealth of Judah to show off. He had forgotten that without God none of it would have been there. Because of this God sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to tell him that because he had shown pride in his possessions the Babylonians would eventually come and take all those riches and Hezekiah's descendants into captivity.

We need to be aware at all times of our attitudes; it is so easy to get carried away in our successes and forget that they come from God and take the glory for ourselves rather than Him and that will have consequences for us as Proverbs 16:18 tells us;

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

Hezekiah was a great king and a man after God's heart as his father David had been. But as with David he also had his weaknesses and on occasions allowed the Devil to show him the wrong path. It doesn't matter how we have served God in the past we need to be on our guard continually against the wiles of the Devil. He may only have deceit and lies as his weapons but he's expert at using them and we can so easily fall as we have seen so many examples over the years.

It won't happen to me we say but there but for the grace of God it could easily be us. As we're told in Ephesians we need to put on the full armour of God daily and look to Him in all circumstances for His strength and wisdom.