

## Hezekiah's Prayer

Levi turned when his wife, Nadia, reached for his hand. The jury had been deliberating for two hours.

Levi was on administrative leave as an assistant basketball coach at the nearby public state university. A group of parents had brought charges against him and the college, saying Levi had violated their sons' civil rights.

Levi had been a coach for almost half of his 52 years. He loved the sport and enjoyed mentoring young men. The boys who didn't have a father figure in their lives seemed especially drawn to Levi.

Today's case was about three boys. They met with Levi outside of practice hours and talked. Many times, those discussions ended in prayer. The case hadn't been brought by the families of those boys but by parents of others on the team. It had gotten out that Levi was praying with some of the players he was coaching, and the news was upsetting to some parents.

"We are praying that the jury will find you not guilty, your job will be restored, and His name will get all the glory for your deliverance," Pastor Thomas had said the Sunday before the trial began.

Two months later, Levi was in his office immersed in his email when his head swiveled toward the tap on the door.

"I didn't want to disturb you," said Gary, a football coach. "I heard you won your case, and the university let you come back. That had to be God!"

**1.** *How are you contributing to sharing God's deliverance with the world?*

**2.** *What do you think it means for something to be known "in all the earth"?*

**3.** *How would you rate your current prayer life on a scale of 1–10? Why?*

## God Hears from Heaven

*2 Kings 19:14–16 KJV*

14 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.

15 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.

16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

*2 Kings 19:14–16 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."

Hezekiah took the threatening letter from the Assyrian king Sennacherib to the temple and spread it out before the Lord. Sharing the letter showed Hezekiah's sincerity and anguish because of the letter's contents. As he would before an earthly judge, the king spread out the evidence before the Lord. With the evidence presented to the judge, the king begins his plea by acknowledging God's majesty and power. Unlike the false gods of the other nations, which were made by their worshipers' hands, Judah's God is creator of all, and He is the one who made all the people of the earth.

After acknowledging God's splendor and might, Hezekiah pleads with the Lord to hear his prayer, to "listen" (v. 16). The basis for the king's plea was not the dire straits that Judah and Jerusalem were in, though of course that was prominent in the mind of the king. Rather,

Hezekiah says the very honor of God's holy name was at stake. The Assyrian king had confused the true God with the false gods of the surrounding nations and mocked Him. Was God powerless to save? There can be no greater basis for the prayers of God's people than His honor and holy reputation. For instance, we know from Scripture that God is faithful to His promises. We can remember God's promises when we pray, and this teaches us to trust Him.

4. *How do you respond when people insult God's name?*
5. *How did the Judah's king respond to the message?*
6. *What does he ask of the Lord?*

## God's Answers from Heaven

2 Kings 19:17–20 KJV

17 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,  
18 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.  
19 Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.  
20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent 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.

2 Kings 19:17–20 NIV

<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."

Sennacherib's letter said that the gods from all other nations were not able to protect them from the conquering Assyrians. As a pagan and worshiper of other gods himself, the Assyrian king felt proud that even so-called gods offered no protection from his armies. He attributed it to his strength and the superiority of Assyria's gods.

However, Hezekiah knew the truth: those "gods" of the surrounding nations were not gods at all, but merely idols made by the hands of their worshipers. A piece of wood or stone cannot offer help or stave off defeat in battle.

Since he knew that idols offered false hope, Hezekiah pleads with God to deliver Judah and Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, but not only because he fears death and destruction. Hezekiah's prayer is not that he wants God to help him to avoid suffering. The king has a higher concern in mind: God's good name. Whereas nations with false gods fell to Assyria, the Lord's deliverance of His people would proclaim that He is the one true God.

After Hezekiah's prayer, the prophet Isaiah sent a message of the good news. God heard the king's prayer.

**7.** *How does Hezekiah contrast the gods of the other nations with Israel's God?*

**8.** *Why does Hezekiah want the Lord to deliver His people?*

**9.** *What was the prophet Isaiah's message to Hezekiah?*

## God's Zeal Will Be Known

2 Kings 19:29–31 KJV

29 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third

2 Kings 19:29–31 NIV

<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

year sow ye, and reap,  
and plant vineyards, and  
eat the fruits thereof.

30 And the remnant that  
is escaped of the house of  
Judah shall yet again take  
root downward, and bear  
fruit upward.

31 For out of Jerusalem  
shall go forth a remnant,  
and they that escape out  
of mount Zion: the zeal  
of the LORD of hosts shall  
do this.

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.”

The Lord gives Hezekiah a sign of His promise to deliver Judah. With the Assyrians surrounding them, there was little opportunity to grow crops. As a sign to His faithfulness, for two years the land would grow sufficient food without cultivation. Then, in the third year, the people would sow and reap to feed themselves. God would preserve a remnant of people from Judah to resettle the land, for His glory. This would be accomplished by the Lord’s “zeal” (v. 31). The Hebrew word for “zeal” communicates the idea of God’s holy jealousy for His people. His love would accomplish all He promises.

We also rely on our God to deliver us. Through faith in Christ, our deliverance from the bonds of sin is every bit as real as Jerusalem’s deliverance in Hezekiah’s day. It is God’s love that provides the way of salvation. Those who are saved by grace through faith have the great privilege of spreading the message of God’s deliverance around the world. Let us pray that the gospel will go forth with great zeal. Let us pray that we might understand our part.

**10.** *What was the sign that God gave to Hezekiah?*

**11.** *What would a remnant of the house of Judah do?*

**12.** *How will God’s promises be accomplished?*

## Being Persistent in Prayer

Every believer knows that prayer is a vital part of the Christian walk. It is how we commune with God our Father, and what relationship can grow without communication? Back in the Old Testament, when the Israelites wanted to pray, they relied on priests to pray on their behalf and to enter the presence of God; the most Holy Place was full of God's presence. But since Jesus came and died for our sins, He tore the curtain that was dividing us from God and made the Father accessible to all of us, every moment of the day (Mark 15:38). There is no longer a need for a high priest or an animal sacrifice, for Jesus is our High Priest and the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Those roles have been fulfilled for perpetuity. We have full and open access to God.

In our "I-need-it-now" world, we expect God to answer our prayers now, like a genie in a bottle. We liken praying to ordering something online and waiting for it to arrive at our door. That's not how God works. True, there are instances of immediate healing and miracles that happen before our eyes. But most of the time, prayer involves waiting—for the right timing, for the right next opportunity, for the next door to open. And sometimes we think that God didn't hear us, or God says no. If it seems like the answer isn't coming—or not the answer we expected—we must trust that God sees variables that we do not.

God's timing is always perfect. If we pray for His will to be accomplished in all circumstances, we know it will be when the time is right. In the meantime, we keep praying and encouraging one another in the faith.

**13.** *What prayers of yours feel unanswered?*

**14.** *What is the biggest answer to prayer you've witnessed?*

**15.** *How often do you spend time in prayer and quiet reflection? What does your prayer routine look like?*

## Keep Praying

Hezekiah's prayer goes through four stages: he began with praise; he presented the issue; he confidently reflected on God's power; and he recognized his need for God's deliverance. God hears you, and He is honored by your faithful prayers.

- ▶ *Write a prayer for the coming week, following Hezekiah's model.*
- ▶ *Praise:*
- ▶ *Your request:*
- ▶ *God's power to deliver:*
- ▶ *Your need for God's deliverance:*

### KEY VERSE

Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only. —2 Kings 19:19 KJV

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. —2 Kings 19:19 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSONS

#### Week of September 16 through September 22

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Corinthians 5—Abstain from Immorality.
- Tue.** Revelation 5:6–14—Worthy Is the Lamb!
- Wed.** 2 Chronicles 34:8, 14–27—God Forgives Those Who Repent.
- Thu.** Psalm 85—Restore Us Again, O God.
- Fri.** Ephesians 5:3–14—Living in the Light of Christ.
- Sat.** Exodus 12:3–17—A Day of Celebration.
- Sun.** 2 Chronicles 35:1–6, 16–19—Sanctify Yourselves.