

Let The Bible Speak Series

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Hezekiah

Good morning and welcome to Let The Bible Speak. It is so good to have you with us on our program today. We appreciate the fact that you set aside this portion of your Sunday morning to study the bible with us. Romans 15:4 makes it clear that the things which were written aforetime (that is, during the Old Testament period) were written for our (those of us who have lived since the beginning of the New Testament dispensation) learning and our admonition. This means that people living today are to search Old Testament Scriptures in order to see how the principles which are involved therein might be used to better understand the message of the New Testament. For this reason it is altogether appropriate, even necessary, to study the lives of both wicked and righteous men. In this sermon, we are studying King Hezekiah, and our aim is to deal with the principles which motivated his attitudes and actions, and explain the relevance and significance of those principles to those of us today.

Lessons Learned From Hezekiah.

I. One Can Overcome the Influence of an Evil Father.

Ahaz the father of Hezekiah was a very wicked man. Some scholars have regarded him as the most wicked king who ever ruled the nation of Judah. Ahaz was guilty of idolatry.

He forsook the worship of God and in its place worshiped the gods of the heathen.

Such worship was foul and degrading, and is best described by the words of 2Kings 16:3 as "the abominations of the heathen. This worship included the practice of child sacrifice. Ahaz made his own son "pass through the fire" i.e. he offered his own child as a burnt offering to a pagan god. Ahaz made alliances with foreign nations (Assyria) which led him deeper into sin. He paid dearly for this alliance, by taking the silver and gold from the temple and sending it to the King as a gift, in exchange for his friendship.

He plundered the house of God It is a fearful thing to take what rightfully belongs to God and give it to another. Ahaz also set up a heathen alter in the house of the Lord.

While in Damascus visiting the king of Assyria, he saw an alter used in the worship of heathen gods. He sent to Urijah, the priest, a description of the alter, who caused a similar alter to be erected in the temple at Jerusalem. Upon his return, he substituted the pagan alter in place of the alter of the Lord. Such was the kind of environment from which Hezekiah emerged. In spite of the fact that his father, Ahaz was a very wicked man, he did not allow that to deter him from loving and serving God. When ones father is wicked it seems easy (judging by what often happens in human life) for the sons to follow the same lifestyle. The lesson from Hezekiah is that one can be a good man, faithful to God, even if his own father was or is a very wicked person. Ezek. 18:20 "The soul who sins shall die, the son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." We all recognize the truth of this passage.

But we also recognize the difference between guilt and influence. Each person determines his own destiny. Hezekiah, determined to do right even though he lived in the house of a man who did not. People should consider this with respect to religion. Those who cling to the religion of their parents, even though it is wrong, make a terrible mistake. Just as those who follow in the steps of wicked parents.

II. Young People Should Seek God in Their Youth.

Hezekiah was a devoted, righteous person even when he was a young man.

He did not wait until later in life to come to God. At the young age of twenty-five he came to the throne. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them." Eccl. 12:1 But why should we seek God in our youth?

1. because youth, as the first portion of a man's life, is due to God.
2. because youth, as the formative period of life, is the most important time for acquiring religious habits. (language, going to church, respect for a supreme being, etc.)
3. because youth as the happiest season of life, is the time in which God can most easily be remembered. In a general sense, the joys that were possible in youth will be out of reach when a man gets to the period of his decline. When that time comes he will feel so weakened and life will hold so little of interest for him that he will not be disposed to give very serious consideration to spiritual subjects if he had not done so while in his youth. If, however, we think of God "in the days of our youth" and have tempered the joys of life by a regard for our creator, then we will have something to cheer us when the days of decline come. Hezekiah realized all this and began early in life to serve the Living God. Many have obeyed the gospel later in life, only to lament "I wish I had come to the Lord sooner."

III. We Must Never Substitute Anything For God.

2Kings 18:4 "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan." (nau-huhsh-tan) (bronze thing). v.6-8 "For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city." High places—elevated place from which they worshipped idols. These high places were features of the Canaanite religion, which the Israelites were commanded to destroy. The high places were defiled by Canaanite fertility cults and other paganistic pollutions and connected with licentiousness and immorality. It was here that both male and female prostitutes were apart of pagan religious activity. The brazen serpent had been made for one purpose only, to look at in case of the serpent's bite. It was never intended as an object of veneration, much less to be worshiped with the burning of incense. That made an idol out of an object that had a divine origin, and Hezekiah destroyed it. He essentially said "you people have, in your minds, elevated a mere piece of brass to the level of God. Which in reality is nothing but a piece of brass." In contrast to this, Hezekiah pleaded for the people to:

1. open the doors of the house of the Lord (which had been shut for many years) and
2. Remove all of the idols which they had put there.

2Chron. 31:1 "Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the alters from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession."

Notice carefully that "they had utterly destroyed them all" they left no remnant of idolatry. They destroyed every idol.

In doing these two things they would make the house of the Lord clean and pure for proper worship. In the same way we must put away from us every wayward practice that smacks of innovation and departure from the sacred word. Why is it that some want to get as close to an unscriptural practice as

they can and when questioned about it, cry "foul" or call into question the motives of sincere and concerned brethren who demand a scripture for their practices. Because of his life and dedicated zeal in restoring the proper order in the house of the Lord, the scripture tells us that there was "none like Hezekiah." That is he had individual characteristics in his service to God unlike those of any others. Today, many people including some members of the Lord's church, are unfaithful to God, because they have made "gods" out of such things as money, fame, sensuality, and praise from the world. Just as Hezekiah cleansed the house of the Lord, we should be doing the same thing. Instead of moving toward innovations and changing the worship of God, we ought to be cleansing the church of all impurities and man-made practices.

As a result of Hezekiah's efforts the people did return to God. They even began to celebrate the Passover feast. Read 2Chron. 30:1-5 We must continue to call people back to the bible way of doing things. When our own brethren drift away from the truth, they must be challenged, and called back to what is right. Read 2Chron. 29:3-11.

IV. We Must Give Unquestioning Obedience to God.

Although Hezekiah had served God with all his heart, God told him that he would soon die from an infected boil. 2Kings. 20:1. This must have been difficult for the king to understand, but he did not let it embitter him and he did not question God.

Rather he wept sore as he besought God's blessings. 2Kings 20:2-3 "Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly." Each one of us must be willing to submit to the will of God even if we do not understand the "whys" of our situation or God's requirements. Many people ask "why; me Lord?" "What have I done?"

Why the sickness, the financial setback, the family problems. All such problems are no reason for leaving the church or failing in our Christian living. Many today question God's arrangements. Instead of accepting what God has said and following his instructions they say "the bible doesn't say we can't do it that way." Or "the bible doesn't say it is a sin to use instrumental music" or "the bible doesn't say that the first day of the week is the only time we can partake of the communion. It is evident that they are not satisfied with what the bible says, hence they seek to do something new or different based on the fact that the bible doesn't say specifically that this is wrong.

Questioning God is wrong. Undermining sacred scripture by trying to get around plain bible statements is wrong. God both wants and demands unquestioning obedience.

Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" and were condemned.

Lev. 10:1 "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them." Notice that statement "which he commanded them not."

God told them what to offer. He did not have to tell them what not to offer. "What they were to offer" excluded everything else.

V. When We Are Weak We Should Seek Help from the Strong.

Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah in 701 B. C. after Hezekiah had rebelled against him. Eventually he sent the Assyrian king sent officers to Jerusalem to demand unconditional surrender. At this point the Rabshakeh (chief officer) carried on psychological warfare by trying to demoralize the people of Jerusalem. At this point Hezekiah turns to the strong prophet Isaiah, in his hours of weakness and fear. When the messengers arrived Isaiah told them "Thus shall you say to your master, Thus says the Lord: Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his

own land and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." 2Kings 19:6-7 When good, faithful saints have fallen into sin, or even discouragement, they should turn, for spiritual help, to strong, faithful brethren.

Gal. 6:1 "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

Those who are strong have a responsibility to help those who are weak, as Isaiah did Hezekiah: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Romans 15:1 Hezekiah was truly a great man, a great king and from him we learn many valuable and helpful lessons.