

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Aug. 8: God can bring deliverance in times of crisis_72604

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God can bring deliverance in times of crisis

2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:23

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When it comes to facing crises, the question is not “if” but “when.” You either have faced or will encounter challenging times in life. People tend to grit their teeth and resolve to overcome. Responding in that manner may suffice, but at other times the only means of deliverance is for God to intervene. Christians need to learn to trust God in threatening situations. King Hezekiah of Judah provides one example.

Announce trust (18:30)

Hezekiah, one of Judah's most godly kings, succeeded his father Ahaz, one

of its most wicked. Ahaz had chosen to pay tribute to Assyria rather than trust God's promise for security. Hezekiah demonstrated that his character resembled King David's by purging the nation of idols. He further displayed his loyalty to God by rebelling against Assyrian domination. Hezekiah publicly shared his confidence in God.



Assyria reacted by seizing some of Judah's cities. Hezekiah then relented and stripped the temple's and king's treasuries to pay tribute. His actions failed to satisfy the Assyrian king who sent high-ranking officials to Jerusalem. They publicly ridiculed Hezekiah's trust in God. They declared that no god had protected its people from Assyria. They challenged Hezekiah's word that trusting God was the best course of action. Neither God nor the king could withstand the attacks of the Assyrians.

Admit weakness (19:1-3)

Hezekiah responded quickly. He showed grief and despair by tearing off his clothes and putting on sackcloth. He understood that God alone could save the people and went to the temple to pray. He refused to abandon God.

The king sent officials to Isaiah to report the Assyrian threats. Hezekiah wanted Isaiah to intercede for the nation. He sought the prophet's help while Ahaz had rejected Isaiah's advice (2 Kings 16:5-10). Hezekiah may have wondered how Isaiah would respond. The prophet had been critical of Hezekiah's earlier rebellion against Assyria. Isaiah opposed the alliance the king had made with Egypt as an act which indicated a lack of trust in God (Isaiah 30:1-5; 31:1-3). At that time, the prophet considered the Assyrians' attack as God's act of judgment on the people. In addition to reporting the words of the Assyrians, they informed the prophet of Hezekiah's great distress.

The foreigners had maintained that God was powerless to deliver Jerusalem. The king likened the situation to the physical exhaustion a woman experiences giving birth. Hezekiah had no ready answer for his predicament. He, however, possessed the spiritual discernment to seek God's intervention through the prophet. He knew God alone could deliver.

Ask for God's help (19:5-7, 14-19)

Isaiah had God's answer when Hezekiah's aides reached him. Isaiah assured the king God would honor his confidence. God would intervene with power sufficient to protect the nation. To contend that God was powerless to protect his people was blasphemous. The words which threatened Jerusalem directly mocked God. The Lord God would respond.

God promised to rescue Judah without the nation being forced to fight. God would cause the Assyrian king to hear a rumor from home which would lead him to abandon his siege. Opponents would assassinate Sennacherib after his return to Nineveh.

Another Assyrian challenge interrupted Isaiah's message and Hezekiah's response to it. This time the taunting was directed more against Yahweh than Hezekiah. The enemy then sent Hezekiah a written letter detailing their demands. The king spread it before God in the temple. He prayed for God's deliverance. He began praying by proclaiming God's glory. The mention of cherubim reminds us of the innermost room of the temple where God would meet his people with mercy.

Hezekiah implored God to hear his prayer. He asked God to respond to Sennacherib's taunts of the living God. He had declared their gods superior to Yahweh. Hezekiah worshipped a living God who alone was "over all the kingdoms of the earth."

Judah's king acknowledged the Assyrians' military might. They had

conquered at will. They had burned and destroyed the gods of their vanquished foes. But Hezekiah knew these gods were merely idols fashioned from wood and stone. They had been created by human effort and possessed no power or strength.

Inanimate objects could not deliver, but Judah's God was alive and powerful. Hezekiah's prayer encompassed more than simply saving a people who were besieged. Saving Jerusalem was certainly important. But “now” (v. 19), Hezekiah asked God to deliver for God's sake as well as the nation's. God could demonstrate his power and reveal himself as the God of all nations and peoples by delivering Jerusalem. All nations could see Yahweh alone was God.

God's majesty, power and faithfulness were witnessed as the Lord saved the city by sending the angel who put to death 185,000 Assyrian troops. Sennacherib withdrew, returned home and was assassinated as Isaiah had foretold.

God promised deliverance. God delivered. True deliverance comes when Christians rely on God in times of crisis.

Question for discussion

- Where do you first turn in times of crisis?

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