



When you are faced with a crisis, what do you do? Do you begin by going to God in prayer? In 2 Kings 19, that is exactly what Hezekiah did. He chose to try to bribe the aggressive king of Assyria in chapter 18, but when Sennacherib returned in force against Judah, Hezekiah realized he had made a mistake. This time, he brought the matter to the Lord. In response, God distracted then decimated the forces of Assyria in one night. He also condemned to death Sennacherib, and two of this evil king's own sons killed him by the sword. Then when Hezekiah faced a health crisis, he again cried unto the Lord, and again God heard him. This time, the Lord answered by giving Hezekiah 15 more years to live, showing us again how merciful our God is. As we study chapters 19 to 20, we must ask ourselves, do we cry out to the Lord at the first sign of trouble? Or do we cling to worthless idols—to our own means of security—to provide us with comfort amid difficult times? Who or what have we placed our trust in?

1. Context

- a. The Assyrian Empire was the dominant power of the time.
- b. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 723 B.C.
 - i. They absorbed the Israelites into their society.
 - ii. They sent some of their people to live in Israel to make the land adopt Assyrian culture.
 - iii. The Assyrians sent to Israel and the poor Israelites left in the land intermarried, giving birth to the Samaritan people.
 1. There was racial tension between Jews and Samaritans.
 2. This tension is why the Samaritan woman was surprised Jesus was willing to talk with her.
- c. The Assyrians threatened the southern kingdom of Judah in 721 B.C.
 - i. They thought they could conquer Judah like they had conquered Israel, but they could not.
 1. Hezekiah was a relatively good king and reigned during this time, so God was with the Jews and fought for them.

2. **2 Kings 19:1–4** – *“And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard it [the threat of the Assyrians coming against Judah], that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. Then he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. And they said to him, ‘Thus says Hezekiah: “This day is a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth. It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke*

the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.””

a. Hezekiah's grief

- i. Hezekiah was aware his kingdom was in danger.
 1. Putting on sackcloth and tearing one's clothes were signs of mourning.
- ii. In his grief, Hezekiah went to the Lord for aid.
 1. **DISCUSS:** Do you entrust your worry and grief to God? How does the Lord help you handle your heaviness?
- iii. Hezekiah asked the man of God, Isaiah, to pray on their behalf.
 1. This is the same prophet Isaiah who wrote the book that bears his name.
 2. Hezekiah said, *"The children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth"* was a way to show grief.
 - a. Sometimes a woman would travail so much in trying to give birth that she and her child would die.
 - b. This metaphor expressed the dire situation Judah was in.

b. Hezekiah's hope

- i. Hezekiah prayed that God would hear Rabshakeh's insults and defend Judah.
 1. Rabshakeh was the title of the Assyrian official who conveyed the king's threats to the kingdom of Judah.
 2. Rabshakeh mocked the Lord, thinking God could not protect the Jews from the hand of the Assyrians.
 3. **DISCUSS:** Have you ever been mocked by a Rabshakeh? How have you learned, or are learning, to not allow the mockers to discourage you?
- ii. Hezekiah wanted Isaiah to pray for *"the remnant."*
 1. The phrase *"the remnant"* is a reference to the Assyrians besieging a few towns of Judah and capturing the people there.
 2. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had made headway against Judah even if he was not ultimately successful in capturing Jerusalem, the capital.
 3. Colonel Robert Taylor discovered a clay cylinder in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which documents Sennacherib's assaults on the towns of Judah.
 4. When translated, the Taylor Prism says the following: "As for Hezekiah the Jew, who did not submit to me, all forty-six of his strong, walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighborhood, I besieged and took 200,150 people, great and small I brought away from them and counted as spoil. Himself [Hezekiah] like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city."

3. **2 Kings 19:5–13** – *“So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said to them, ‘Thus you shall 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.’”’ Then the Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish. And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, ‘Look, he has come out to make war with you.’ So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: “Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, ‘Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?’”’”*

a. God’s comfort

- i. God reassured Hezekiah, promising to take care of the blasphemer with a rumor.
 - 1. The king of Ethiopia had invaded Assyria, giving Judah some reprieve as their enemies left to defend their land.

b. Rabshakeh’s threat

- i. Rabshakeh sent a letter to intimidate the people of Judah.
 - 1. Rabshakeh said that their God would not be able to defend them any more than the gods of the pagans could.
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** People rely on many idols for safety, such as money, power, and connections. How have you seen God be so much greater a refuge than any of those false gods?

4. **2 Kings 19:14–19** – *“And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: ‘O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands—wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone.’”*

a. The letter

- i. Hezekiah put Rabshakeh’s letter before the Lord.

1. Hezekiah's willingness to trust God in this moment is one reason he is considered one of the good kings of Judah.
- b. Hezekiah's prayer
 - i. Hezekiah called God *"the One who dwells between the cherubim."*
 1. The cherubim are the angelic creatures over the lid of the ark of the covenant.
 2. The Bible says God dwells between the cherubim.
 3. **DISCUSS:** How do you take courage now, knowing that God is not only enthroned in heaven but also living in you? How does that change your perspective and way of life?
 - ii. Hezekiah asked God to deliver His people.
 1. We must pray as the first resort.
 2. In **2 Kings 18**, Hezekiah tried to pay off Sennacherib, stripping the gold off the temple of the Lord to pay him tribute.
 3. When Sennacherib returned, Hezekiah realized he had to pray.
 4. **DISCUSS:** Is prayer your first response? How did you realize God needed to be your first resort?
5. **2 Kings 19:20-31** – *"Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard." This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him: "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back! Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. By your messengers you have reproached the Lord, and said: 'By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypress trees; I will enter the extremity of its borders, to its fruitful forest. I have dug and drunk strange water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense.' Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it? Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins. Therefore their inhabitants had little power; they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field and the green herb, as the grass on the housetops and grain blighted before it is grown. But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against Me. Because your rage against Me and your tumult have come up to My ears, therefore I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came. This shall be a sign to you: You shall eat this year such as grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from the same; also in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant,*

and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.””

a. The Lord's answer

i. The listener

1. The Lord comforted Hezekiah with words addressed to Sennacherib.

ii. The metaphor

1. The Lord called Judah His virgin daughter.
2. The Lord knew that Sennacherib planned to despoil His virgin daughter.
3. The Lord said that His daughter laughed at the Assyrian king's schemes.
4. **DISCUSS**: When has knowing you are on God's side given you joy despite the troubles around you?

iii. Sennacherib's pride

1. The Lord mocked the pride of Sennacherib.
2. Sennacherib thought his power had reached the mountains, and God reminded him that He had made those mountains.
3. **DISCUSS**: Falling into pride is easy. What did God say to humble Sennacherib, and how does remembering the same remind us to stay humble?
4. God said He had allowed Sennacherib to destroy the pagan kings so they could remove Judah's idolatrous neighbors.
5. **DISCUSS**: When have you seen God turn the evil of this world to His good purposes? How does that give you hope?

iv. Hook and bridle

1. The Assyrians were cruel, and they would put hooks in their captives' noses or jaws, stringing them like fish toward Assyria.
2. The Lord used the language to show He is stronger than they.

b. The Lord's sign

- i. The Lord gave a sign to prove that this prophecy was from the Lord.
- ii. During Sennacherib's assaults, the land was scorched.
 1. This assault made sowing and reaping difficult.
 2. God said the land would be healed enough to bear fruit on the third year.

6. **2 Kings 19:32–34** – *“Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: “He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come into this city,” says the LORD. “For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David's sake.” And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. So*

Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.”

- a. God’s faithfulness
 - i. God is true to His character and to His people.
 - ii. God sent an angel, and that single angel killed 185,000 men of the Assyrian army.
 - 1. **DISCUSS:** When has God rescued you and fought your battles?
- b. The Assyrian response
 - i. King Sennacherib of Assyria returned home.
 - ii. Sennacherib worshiped his idol, Nisroch.
 - 1. Nisroch is only mentioned twice in the Bible.
 - 2. Nisroch is an Assyrian god with the head of an eagle and the body of a man.
- c. Adrammelech and Sharezer
 - i. Two of Sennacherib’s sons killed him, for he was a wicked man.
 - 1. These two sons fled to Turkey.
 - 2. Sennacherib was slain by the sword, as God foretold.
 - ii. Sennacherib’s son Esarhaddon became king after him.

7. **2 Kings 20:1-3** – *“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.”’ 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.”*

- a. Hezekiah’s illness
 - i. Hezekiah had some infection and likely had sepsis by this point.
 - ii. God told Hezekiah to get his affairs in order in preparation for his death.
- b. Hezekiah’s plea
 - i. Hezekiah turned to the wall.
 - 1. The idea is that Hezekiah did not plead with Isaiah, but God.
 - 2. Hezekiah wanted a private moment of prayer with the Lord.
 - ii. Hezekiah’s pleaded with God on the basis of his walk with God.
 - 1. This was during the Old Testament, a time when the Lord promised to deal with men according to their works.
 - 2. In **Deuteronomy 28**, God listed the blessings on the obedient and the curses on the disobedient.
 - 3. In the New Testament, God has sent His Son to die for us, and we are made right with Him because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice.

- a. If God gives us no other blessing, the death of His Son for our salvation is enough.

8. **2 Kings 20:4-11** – *“And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.’”’ Then Isaiah said, ‘Take a lump of figs.’ So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘What is the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?’ Then Isaiah said, ‘This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?’ And Hezekiah answered, ‘It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees.’ So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.”*

- a. God’s mercy
 - i. God hears the cries of His people.
 - 1. **DISCUSS:** When has God heard the cry of your heart? How did that affect your spiritual walk?
 - ii. In His sovereignty, God extended Hezekiah’s life by 15 years.
 - 1. Hezekiah was 39 years old when he became deathly ill.
 - 2. Hezekiah therefore died when he was 54 years old.
- b. Isaiah’s instructions
 - i. Isaiah instructed Hezekiah’s servants on how to heal Hezekiah.
 - 1. God can use medical means to bring about miraculous results.
 - 2. In the Gospels, Jesus mixed saliva with dirt to heal a blind man.
 - 3. Let us not limit the means the Great Physician uses to heal us.
- c. God’s sign
 - i. God miraculously make the shadow to go backward.
 - 1. Some people believe God bent the light, so this may have been a miracle of refraction.
 - 2. Symbolically, the shadow on the sundial going backward shows us that God is in control of time itself.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)