

FEASTING ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

What Happens When We Pray

2 Kings 18-19

INTRODUCTION: King Hezekiah of Judah was fruit that fell from a rotten tree.

Ahaz, his father, had promoted the worship of every pagan god of the Middle East, and he himself had offered his firstborn son and other children to the Canaanite god Moloch.

Hezekiah, was the oldest son to escape his father's wickedness and live. How the Lord our God rescued Hezekiah from the perverse genetics and environment of the eighth century BC, we do not know. But rescue this young man God did. Of Hezekiah the Scripture says,

2 Kings 18:3 NKJV And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

2 Kings 18:5 NKJV He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.

In his early years as king, Hezekiah

- Destroyed the pagan altar his father had put in the place of the Altar of Sacrifice that stood in front of the temple.
- He incited the people to destroy the altars built to multiple false gods upon the multitude of hills of Judah.
- He re-instituted the sacrifices to and worship of YHWH, the one true and living God.

And thus the Scripture says of King Hezekiah

2 Kings 18:6 NKJV For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.

Hezekiah was a man who feasted on the faithfulness of God.

Hezekiah practiced Psalm 37 that we talked about last week.

- **Delighted himself in the Lord**
- **Committed his way to God**

- **Did not give in to fretting or to anger**
- **But he rested in the Lord, choosing to wait patiently for Him.**

This Hezekiah did through prayer. And the Bible says,...

2 Kings 18:7 NKJV The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

Ahab's decision to refuse to be the vessel of a foreign power who served the false gods of this world, quickly resulted in two things.

- Sennacherib, the king of Assyria came calling at the gates of Jerusalem with his mighty army.
- Hezekiah, the king of Judah, fell on His knees before the God of Heaven.

By means of his prayers, Hezekiah once again experienced the faithfulness of God.

With his army camped outside Jerusalem, Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah saying,

2 Kings 19:10–11 NKJV ... '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." 11 Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered? 12 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?

Hezekiah received the letter from Sennacherib's messengers, read it and said, "I'm giving this to God!" And the king marched right up to the House of God, fell on his knees and spread the letters out on the floor.

2 Kings 19:15-19 NKJV ... "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."

Folks, **sometimes to experience the faithfulness of God we have to give things over to God.** Folks all over the world, folks all over our country are panicking because of the Coronavirus. So, for \$1,000 you can buy one of these Safety Suits.

Well, at least in this you couldn't touch your face!

And we all need to take the reasonable precautions recommended by the CDC, but folks, we need to be giving this crisis and this threat over to God! We need to be falling on our knees before the Almighty calling upon the One Who is Always Faithful to pour out healing, protection, and recovery to each of us individually, and to our families, and to our nation, and to the world, which was made by His all-powerful hands.

James 4:2 NKJV ... you do not have because you do not ask.

- Prayer is not a mere exercise in positive thinking.
- Prayer is not just a realignment of one's own attitude.
- Prayer is calling upon the Creator of the Universe, conversing with Him, asking for His help and intercession.
- **Prayer invokes the mighty power of the Living God!**

All of us remember Hurricane Michael. Many of you gathered here will remember when we gathered together the first Sunday after the storm out on our north parking lot. As we were preparing to pray I asked you to join me to specifically pray that God would give us a large tent because we were going to begin ministering to our community. We knew that God was going to supply the needs of the people all around us. And we needed a tent to keep those goods and be able to distribute those things. We knew no source of the tent. We knew that God had the resource available. So that day standing out there on the parking lot we prayed for God to get us a tent. Two days later the tent showed up. We did not discover who owned the tent or who loaned us the tent until we were in the process of taking it down. But we knew that God had sent us that tent to use to minister to the community.

Interestingly I had a similar experience back in Slidell, LA when Hurricane Katrina hit. We had one tent that had been quickly loaned to us by our LA Baptist Convention. We had filled it up with food and cleaning supplies. But Katrina was different from Michael in that the floodwaters had entered everyone's home and most people had almost all of their clothes completely ruined by the foul smelling mud that was brought into their residences. So we needed a second tent to hold tons of clothing that was being donated to the people of the community. When I realized this need I said to one of my fellow ministers, "I don't know where in the world we might be able to find another tent. By this time every other tent in the state and region will already be committed to the various places that are doing disaster relief. I don't even know who to call or who to ask." And about that time my cell phone rang. I answered and a man said, "We're from Texas and we are in the business of making tents. If you happen to need a large tent we just finished one that we can bring to your property and set up." I said, "Oh that would be marvelous if you would loan us a tent like that. We need it right now." And he said, "Oh no, we don't want it back. We are giving it to you to use for the Kingdom of God."

Time after time I experienced the hand of God in response to prayer, bringing us the things we needed for our church and all the community. I can remember as we were

trying to clean out our own church to make space for people to come and be able to sleep there and go out into the community to clean up houses that we had stacked all the debris right outside the building. It made a ring around the entire plant. All we had was a small bobcat that would move a little at a time. I was talking to the man who had been operating it all day long trying to move some of the debris away from the building because it was beginning to attract both rats and snakes. I sat down on the shovel of his bobcat and said, "You know what we need is one of those great big tractors with a big shovel on the front end so we could move all this quickly to the back of the property." And about that time my cell phone rang. I answered the phone and the brother said, "Bro. Mike, we are a crew from Minnesota and we've been down to your church once. We're fixing to head back to help the church and community some more. We own some big equipment. Could you use a front end loader?" And I said, "We were just talking about that. We were just asking the Lord to make that available and yes!" He said, "We'll be down in three days." While they were there for the next week they moved every bit of debris out to the back where we were able to later dispose of it. I tell you prayer invokes the mighty power of the Living God.

And that's what Hezekiah did. A massive army that the men of Israel could have never repelled sat in front of the gates of his city. But Hezekiah gave the problem to the Lord and he called upon God in prayer.

We do not know how long Hezekiah waited in faith for his answer from God. We do not know how many times Hezekiah renewed his plea and asked again for the salvation of his people. But the Bible says

2 Kings 19:35 NKJV 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.

And then the Scripture adds,

2 Kings 19:36-37 NKJV 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home*, and remained at Nineveh. 37 Now it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons ... struck him down with the sword;

God is faithful to answer prayer. Nothing is too big. Nothing is too hard.

Luke 1:37 NKJV "For with God nothing will be impossible."

- **God's faithfulness to answer prayer is one of the rewards God gives to the righteous.**
 - We are not saved by deeds of righteousness.
 - But God does reward righteous living and righteous deeds
 - at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

- through the answering of prayer.

Proverbs 15:29 NKJV The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

James 5:16 NKJV ... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

1 Peter 3:12 NKJV For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

CONCLUSION: I wonder if right now, wherever, however you are watching this service, would you join me in prayer as we feast on the faithfulness of God as Hezekiah did?

Just bow your head wherever you are. Close your eyes just to shut out things that might distract you.

Delight yourself in the Lord. You can do this silently, or you can say this aloud. If you are in a group, different ones could say something aloud. Just name or describe the perfections of God.

- God, You are all-powerful. Lord, You are the creator. You have made everything.
- God, You are all-loving. You are merciful and kind and good.

Commit your way to the Lord.

- Lord Jesus, I trust You and I commit myself to follow You as my Lord and Master.
- God, I desire to obey Your Word today and every day.

Do not fret.

- Lord, I will not allow worry and irritation to ignite my anger.
- I will trust in You, and I will

Rest in the Lord, waiting upon Him.

- Concerning this crisis we are in now.
- Concerning the other problems and difficulties I am facing.
- I will bring them to You in prayer and trust in You.

Lord, in faith we have come before You,

- to offer our worship,
- expressions of our trust,
- and to plead for Your help.

We believe; we know.

Nothing is impossible for You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!