

Got To Have Hope
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2 Kings 18

What do we mean when we say: "When Your Back's Against The Wall?"

Country singer Kenny Chesney sang about high school football in his song "The Boys of Fall." In that song there's a line:

"I've got your number, I've got your back,
when your back's against the wall.
You mess with one man, you got us all.
The boys of fall"

- He's talking about TEAM SPIRIT. I'm your teammate, I got your back!
- But sometimes YOUR BACK'S AGAINST THE WALL and your closest friend or family member can't do anything about it.
- When your back's against THAT WALL...LOOK UP! The one who has your back is your Heavenly Father.
- We can RELY ON GOD'S POWER even in seemingly HOPELESS situations.
- Today we meet a man who understood this concept: HEZEKIAH, the King of Judah.
- Last week in Chapter 17 we talked about how the Assyrians conquered the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom, captured them, and took them away into exile.
- I said then that there was also a Southern Kingdom including the land of Judah.
- Now it's about 25 or 30 years later and the Assyrians are back to do the same to the land of Judah.
- The land ruled by King HEZEKIAH.
- Now, HEZEKIAH was a GOOD and GODLY man.

2 Kings 18:5-6 (New International Version, ©2010)

5 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. 6 He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses.

The Life Application Study Bible says of HEZEKIAH:

(He) Had a personal, growing relationship with God & Developed a powerful prayer life

- Now he wasn't perfect either. Later his pride and unwise actions would put his nation in peril.
- Based on the evil ways of his son Manasseh who followed him as king, he didn't do a very good job of raising kids.
- Still, as we'll see in this story HEZEKIAH was a RULER WHO TRUSTED GOD and TURNED TO HIM IN PRAYER when the odds were great!

Some Background:

- The “bad guy” in this story was the King of Assyria: Sennacherib.
- In Hezekiah’s FOURTEENTH YEAR as king, Judah was invaded by Sennacherib.
- Hezekiah tried to pay him off to leave them alone (18:14-16)
- He even stripped the gold off the temple doors and door frames to come up with the payment.
- But Sennacherib was satisfied...so HE SENT THREE MESSENGERS to INTIMIDATE Hezekiah and the people of Judah.
- Hezekiah wouldn’t meet with them...he sent three of HIS men outside the walls of Jerusalem to a SUMMIT
- Sennacherib’s spokesman BELITTLED and BERATED Hezekiah LOUDLY.
- They asked him to speak in Aramaic so the common people wouldn’t understand.
- He refused. He WANTED THE COMMON PEOPLE ON THE WALL to hear and be DISCOURAGED.
- He didn’t just run down their lack of military prowess and strength.
- He BLASPHEMED GOD.
- This is where we pick up the story...

2 Kings 18:28-32

28 Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! 29 This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. 30 Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, ‘The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’

31 “Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, 32 until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death!

“Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’

- Notice, it’s a TWO PART argument from Rabshakeh, Sennacherib’s commander:
 - PART ONE: Don’t listen to Hezekiah...GOD cannot deliver you!
 - “This is going to be BAD for you!”
 - In verse 27 he gets really GRAPHIC: Before this is over you will “...eat your own dung and drink your own urine.” WHEW!
 - Then there’s PART TWO: If you surrender and come with us, we’re taking you to a place where you’ll have all you want:

- “a land of grain and new wine, bread and vineyards, olive trees and honey.”
 - The irony of his last line: “Choose LIFE and not DEATH!”
- This Assyrian commander was using the STANDARD TECHNIQUE of Satan
- When we’re in TROUBLE and our BACK’S AGAINST THE WALL, Satan always starts by planting DOUBT about whether God can come through:
 - “Do you REALLY believe God can get you out of this mess?”
 - “In fact, if God loves you so much, why are you IN THIS MESS?”
 - “What makes you think God has time for YOUR problems?”
 - “How do you know there IS a God?”
- Then Satan’s second tactic: “Give up on God; and follow me to a place of relief from all your troubles.”
 - “God won’t help you...but I WILL!”
 - “God won’t give you a way out of this PAIN...but I WILL!”
 - “I can take you to a place where everything will be ALRIGHT.”
- The fundamental THEME of all of Satan’s lies is: “God is NOT who He says He is.”
- You can IMAGINE how shaken up the people of Judah were to hear these threats!
- So, what did Hezekiah’s three advisers do? TORE THEIR CLOTHES
- Have you noticed whenever there’s bad news in the Old Testament they always TORE THEIR CLOTHES!
- So Hezekiah’s men go back to him and tell him what RABSHAKEH said.
- And what did Hezekiah do? TORE HIS CLOTHES. It must have been a good business to be a tailor in Old Testament times! “Go tell those guys some bad news, business is a little show.”
- After he TORE HIS CLOTHES though, he sent his men to the Prophet Isaiah.
- He said, Tell Isaiah TO PRAY FOR US ALL!

2 Kings 19:5-7

5 When King Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, “Tell your master, ‘This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7 Listen! When he hears a certain report, I will make him want to return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.’”

- Somehow Sennacherib heard that Isaiah had sent this message to Hezekiah so HE SENDS a message to Hezekiah too.
- 19:10: 10 “Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, ‘Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria.’ 11 Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered?”
- This would be a compelling argument. Because the NORTHERN KINGDOM served the same God Hezekiah’s people served.
- Conveniently leaving out the part about the sin of the NORTHERN KINGDOM and how they worshipped idols and REFUSED TO REPEND.

- Hezekiah had a decision to make.
- Do we BELIEVE God IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS and that we can TRUST HIM?

In his book TRUSTING GOD, Jerry Bridges writes:

“...just as we must learn to obey God one choice at a time, we must also learn to trust God one circumstance at a time. Trusting God is not a matter of my feelings but of my will. I never feel like trusting God when adversity strikes, but I can choose to do so even when I don’t feel like it. That act of the will, though, must be based on belief, and belief must be based on truth.” 52

- This time Hezekiah decided to GO DIRECTLY TO THE THRONE OF GOD.
- 19:14 says... “14 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.”
- Did you get that? He took the letter from Sennacherib to the temple and SPREAD THE LETTER BEFORE THE LORD. (Picture this in your mind)
- He took HIS PROBLEM and LAID IT BEFORE THE LORD...and said LORD, this is TOO BIG FOR ME...YOU have to solve it.

2 Kings 19:15-19

15 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. 16 Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

17 “It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. 18 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. 19 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.”

- Now, our Sunday School material STOPS at verse 19. I don’t know why.
- But I can’t leave you hanging. As Paul Harvey would say...you need to know THE REST OF THE STORY.
- This time Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah

2 Kings 19:20

20 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. New International Version, ©2010 (NIV)

- The New American Standard version renders it: 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, (A)I have heard you.'
- And for 15 verses God outlined how He would preserve the people of Judah.
- Then in verse 35...

2 Kings 19:35-36

35 That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

- And verse 37 says Sennacherib's two sons ASSASSINATED their father in Nineveh.
- No more Assyrian army of 185,000...no more King Sennacherib...NO MORE PROBLEM.
- Isn't that a GREAT ENDING?

This week I heard Chuck Swindoll say something that applies perfectly to this lesson: *"There is no joy like the joy of watching God solve a problem!"*

John Piper says:

Now the tremendously important point of this story is seen in the words of Isaiah in (Verse 20), "Because you have prayed to Me concerning Sennacherib, King of Assyria, this is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning him." Because you have prayed! Because you have prayed, 185,000 enemy soldiers lie dead on the plains of Judah. Think of it! Just think of it. Does prayer win battles? Hezekiah, because you have prayed, the strongest king in the known world is gone—off the scene of history. Hezekiah, because you have prayed, the witness of My covenant love for David and My zeal for My name has spread throughout the nations. Because one man prayed. (Emphasis mine)

- When Hezekiah's back was against the wall...HE PRAYED and TRUSTED GOD.

Jerry Bridges again:

"In the arena of adversity, the Scriptures teach us three essential truths about God — truths we must believe if we are to trust Him in adversity. They are: God is completely sovereign. God is infinite in wisdom. God is perfect in love. God in His love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about." 18

What's the TAKEAWAY?

- Is YOUR BACK AGAINST THE WALL?
- Is Satan whispering in your ear: "God won't bail you out!" "Listen to me." "I can take you somewhere and make you ESCAPE your problems"?
- You have a choice. Either God IS who He says He is OR NOT. Either you TRUST HIM or you don't.
- Spread those problems out before the Lord and tell Him it's TOO BIG for you.
- When your back's against the wall LOOK UP!