

“Hezekiah, II: ‘Active’ Faith”

2 Chronicles 32:1-23

The name Hezekiah means ‘Yahweh is my strength’. This morning in 2 Chron. 32 we’ll understand that when we believe God is our strength and trust Him in life’s difficulties we will see how God shows Himself to be strong in our life. So far things have gone well for Hezekiah. After the death of his father who tried to turn Israel away from God, Hezekiah had great success in bringing the people back to the Lord. He reopened the temple, cleaned out all the idolatry that was in there, consecrated it, re-instated the Levites and priests who all responded with an overwhelming desire to serve God once again. But now we come upon Hezekiah’s real test of his faith in God. How will he respond to an attack on the city of Jerusalem but also an attack on his God?

Hezekiah is going to show us what ‘active’ faith in God looks like. A lot of people say they have a faith in God but it seems to disappear when trouble or temptation comes. What does faith look like in action? What does faith in our strong God look like when we’re significantly threatened or our faith is attacked by those who doubt God’s existence and power? Hezekiah is going to help us live out an active faith here in ch. 32.

Ch. 32:1 begins,

After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself.

This is not what we would expect to read. After all that Hezekiah had faithfully done we might expect a blessing from God not a trial. But this is not how life always goes. The apostle Peter actually warns God’s people in 1 Pet. 4:12,

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

Since Christ suffered His followers suffer trials and tests. So Hezekiah was not being punished for any sin he had committed he was being tested. Let’s stop being surprised when we go through difficulties or that God is punishing us. Hezekiah models to us that . . .

Spiritual Attacks Can Come After Spiritual Success **(32:1)**

We should always be aware of it in the back of our minds when things are going too good. We have an enemy and the apostle Peter also wrote in 1 Pet. 5:8

⁸ Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

We're not alone in this regard. Thankfully our enemy is not omnipresent and so these kinds of attacks are temporal. But they are real and they are spiritual attacks so we must be spiritually ready for them. This is when our faith is tested and we need to put it into action. Hezekiah proceeds to

Take All Measures to Withstand Attacks **(32:2-8)**

If we lived in Texas right now and knew there was a hurricane headed our way and said 'We can only pray about this' but not cover our windows or lock away patio furniture or stand on the front porch praying we won't get hurt, we would be extremely foolish. Hezekiah is going to pray but he's also going to take all practical measures to defend his city and his people.

As the king of God's people, Hezekiah knows he needs their help if they are going to reduce their losses or, even better, survive and come out victorious as God's people. So the first thing he does is . . .

Gathers a support network (vv.2-3a)

He consults with his officials and military staff about strategic ways they can slow down the Assyrians. They decide to block off the water from the springs outside the city so the incoming army will have no or limited access to water. The city and military leaders enlist the army and people to be better prepared for the attacks by repairing broken sections of walls, building new walls and reinforcing terraces. If an attack is coming you take all measures to withstand attacks.

You do what you can practically (vv.3b-5)

Just as there are practical preventive measures you can take when a storm is coming, so there are practical preventative measures you can take for spiritual attacks. We all need a support network of Christian community who will help us grow and stay strong in the Lord. People who are close enough to us to show us where our defenses are weak and need strengthening. People who will help us grow strong so we make it harder for the enemy to break through. A good spiritual offense is a good spiritual defense. If you're weak in spending time daily with God in His Word and prayer, if fellowship with other believers is minimal, if you expose yourself to godless, self-centered media and friends over and over, you are unprepared for the subtle spiritual attacks that Satan uses to draw us away from God.

There are many practical steps we can take to strengthen our spiritual defenses from spiritual attacks because unlike Hezekiah here, they don't usually come announced! We don't get Facebook messages or emails or texts saying, watch out for this temptation to sin at 9:47 this morning. But, we do know we will face temptations today of some kind so we better take all measures to be prepared for when they come. Hezekiah takes some obvious practical ways they could defend themselves but he also . . .

Strengthens himself and his people with truth (vv.6-8)

He gathered the leaders together who oversaw the army (who later would repeat Hezekiah's message to the people) and encouraged them with these words.

⁷"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. ⁸With him is only the

arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

He’s quoting Scripture!! God said to Joshua before they went into the Promised Land:

Joshua 1:6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go

God had already spoken these very words of Moses to the Israelites who would battle the Canaanites as they went into the land of Promise in Deut. 32:6

6 Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”

And somebody else said almost the same thing. A former king of Israel to his son a future king of Israel,

1 Chron.22:12 Only the LORD give you discretion and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God.¹³ Then you will prosper, if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be discouraged.

David’s words to Solomon. But that’s not all who Hezekiah quotes. When he said , *for there is a greater power with us than with him.* He was referencing the words of the prophet Elisha who told his servant Gehazi, when the Aramean army surrounded Elisha’s house,

16 “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

And there are many passages where it says the Lord was with His people to fight their battles for them. Hezekiah is encouraging the people through truth. He’s reminding them what God says is true. When Sennacherib comes, as we’ll see, he’s going to say all kinds of things that go against God’s Word. We have to know what God’s Word says so that we can identify the lies that the enemy throws at us.

When we experience temptation or a severe trial do we often fall apart? It’s probably because we’re not reminding ourselves what God says in His Word. The Spirit of God will bring to our minds Scripture that we need for the trial or temptation but if we’re not filling our minds with Scripture He’s got nothing to work with. Our memory verse for August has been Hebrews 3:13,

3:13 but encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

If Scripture strengthens us then we constantly need to be exposed to it as much as possible because we are inundated with lies from the news, politicians, our culture and religions. *“And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah king of Judah said.”*

Hezekiah did not downplay the Assyrian threat. He acknowledged they had a vast army. He tried to show his people that God was bigger than any threat from mankind. As Sennacherib's officers approached Jerusalem we hear the way they try to scare off Hezekiah and his people. And upon listening you realize, this is nothing new. It's the same kind of tactics that Satan has used since the Garden of Eden. Knowing that he often uses the same tactics helps us . . .

Anticipate the Enemy's Methods **(32:9-19)**

Like the serpent with Eve Sennacherib's spokesperson tries to . . .

Cast doubt on God's Word (vv.9-12)

This is why Hezekiah strengthened his people with the Word first, so when the lies came (and they will) they are ready for them.

¹⁰ "This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? ¹¹ When Hezekiah says, 'The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,' he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. ¹² Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god's high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before one altar and burn sacrifices on it'?"

They sought to cast doubt on what Hezekiah said about God. He tries to use God's words against the people. Of course they are also in error because God doesn't accept worship on all the altars that Hezekiah tore down; those were for false gods. The Assyrians need to brush up on their theology. They believed their god was more powerful than anyone else's god since their god supposedly had led them to victory after victory. But there are no such things as other gods. There is only One true God and He is Israel's God.

And then when the enemy gets people to question them-selves and their belief he tries . . .

To intimidate with fear (vv.13-15)

He then rattles off their success rate. All those victories meant Assyrian's god must be better than everyone else's god.

¹⁴ Who of all the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? ¹⁵ Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my predecessors. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!"

V. 14 sounds very similar to the words Nebuchadnezzar would use in Dan. 3 with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God hears all these words and they will come back to haunt them. Then because Satan is usually successful with lies and intimidation, they just do it again. Vv.16-17 they spoke further against the Lord God and against Hezekiah, insulting God and again saying He's not capable of delivering them. And in vv.18-19 more intimidation; they spoke Hebrew and spouted more threats to *'terrify them and make them afraid.'* Then they spoke about God as if he were any other god that man's hands had made. How ironic! Because the Assyrians were worshipping a god they invented!!

The LORD God is not a human invention. He is Yahweh, the only God, the self-existing God, always has been always will be around God. Don't let Satan's lies dissuade you from the power of God to rescue you and answer your prayers. Anticipate the enemy will resort to lies and intimidation because that's the way he works and he's often been successful.

So Hezekiah does all he can practically and wisely but he also entrusts the situation with God. Hezekiah only prepares himself defensively. This is how Paul talks in Eph. 6 that we are to everything we can to stand against the devil. The Word of God is our only offensive weapon along with prayer. So Hezekiah prays, as should we.

Pray and Watch God Work **(32:20-23)**

Let's go to Isaiah 37:36-38 and get a fuller account because here in 2 Chron. 32:20 we read that Hezekiah and Isaiah cried out in prayer and they when they did they saw ...

God works in His own way (v.21a)

In Isaiah's account God gave Isaiah a message of confidence for Hezekiah. He didn't attack Sennacherib's army. Instead God worked it out in His way.

³⁶ Then 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! ³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

Can you imagine! When the people got up the next morning the ground was littered with 185,000 dead soldiers! So distraught was Sennacherib that they went back to Assyria shaking their heads in disbelief. Why didn't their god help them? How could Israel win without shooting an arrow or throwing a stone? How can this be? Ironically Sennacherib, who assumed incorrectly that Yahweh was incapable of protecting Israel, was himself unprotected by his own gods (who didn't exist).

Isaiah's account said Sennacherib never left Nineveh again. He was so distraught about the defeat that some of their own writings reveal he spent a lot of time praying at the house of their god Nisroch, asking why he let them down. Sennacherib's defeat resulted in his neglecting his duties to the point where his own sons decided to murder him while he was praying to his god. God worked things out in His own way and

In His own time (v21b)

Sometimes God works quickly, sometimes He delays. Whether He works quickly or delays the reason is always the same. He answers our prayers and delivers us always

For His glory (vv.22-23)

Back here in 2 Chron. 32:22-23 we read,

²² So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side. ²³ Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the LORD and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on he was highly regarded by all the nations.

This resulted in worship of God giving Him the credit for the victory. And the nations grew in respect of Hezekiah as a result too. This became an opportunity for Hezekiah to give glory to God as well; something we'll see in 2 weeks didn't quite happen that way.

But at this point his prayer and trust in God along with some practical ways of defending himself and his people – physically, materially and spiritually – enabled them to gain victory in the Lord's strength. When it comes to spiritual attacks don't let your guard down after spiritual successes. Be on the alert (Peter warns us) the enemy's always prowling around. Hezekiah knew God's Word and used it to strengthen himself and others. He listened to the prophet Isaiah. He listened to Moses and Joshua and David, all in God's Word. The Word of God is our weapon against spiritual attacks. God will take care of us on every side because He never leaves nor forsakes us. He dwells in us through His Spirit. Greater is He that is in us than is in the world. We who know Jesus Christ as our Saviour are His children. We only become one of His children when we accept what Jesus did on the cross for our sins and believe in our heart that the God who raised Jesus from the dead has the same power to bring us to Himself when we die. He knows who are His. Jesus says of us,

“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them and they follow Me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand.” (John 15:27-28)

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net