

2nd Kings 18:1-37

It's refreshing for us to come to a ch in the book of 2nd Kings like ch 18 because for about the last month or so of studies it seems like we've been reading about one wicked king after the next. Kings who did evil in the sight of the Lord, who took the nation deeper into the declension of idolatry, disobedience and debauchery, last week with regard to the nation of Israel we seen God's tolerance level for sin exhausted and nation carried away into captivity by Assyria. Israel had *disobeyed* the Lord, they'd *doubted* the Lord, and they had *defied* the Lord, and now they've been *delivered by* the Lord into the hands of their enemies. Or to put as the scripture does in ch 17 since they'd sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger, therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and *removed them from His sight*. That is, He removed His hedge of protection *from* them, the favor He'd given *to* them was taken away, they were open prey for the enemy and the enemy ensnared them and took them captive.

And the same is true for you and me, when we disobey the word of God, or doubt what He has say, when we defy Him through rejecting His statutes and the covenant that He has made with us in His Son, that's like a personal invitation to the enemy, it opens us up to be ensnared and enslaved by Him. It invites problems, and various plights, unhealthy predicaments into our lives, Israel learned that the hard way, God would have us to learn by their example, that having seen it in them, we might take heed to what we've seen, and just walk in *obedience* to Him, drawing as it were *near* to Him, that we might simply *enjoy* Him and be blessed *of* Him. God wants to bless your life, but blessing follows obedience, a heart that's set apart to the Lord, available to be used *by* the Lord, you can't lead a life of sin and rebellion and expect God to bless your life. Now I'm not trying to say that God deals with us on the "merit" system, that it's all about what you do, as if you can do something and God will owe you a blessing. No, God *owes* us nothing, but He *honors* your obedience to His word, you walk outside the parameters of His word for your life, you'll reap the reward of your own ways. But to walk with the Lord, in obedience *to* the Lord will result in the blessing *of* the Lord upon your life. Jesus said if you seek 1st the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will take care of your life. Doesn't mean there'll never be hardship, or difficult days, but God will never leave you nor forsake you. God has said, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;*" Isa 43:2-3 But the key word there in vs 2 is "When" not "if" you're going to pass through the waters, but God will be *with* you so that they shall not *overflow* you. Simon and Garfunkel said they'd be a bridge over troubled waters, God never said that. Because God is honest, Simon and Garfunkel are liars. They can't shield you from troubled waters, and God tells you straight up that they're going to come into your life, you'll pass through them, but He'll be with you, they won't overflow you, there'll be fires that you pass through in this life, but you won't be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you, because the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel is your Saviour. Of course we think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, passing through the fire, and how the king knew that he'd only cast 3 in, but when he looked real close he saw 4 and the form of the 4th was like the Son of God.

That's because it was, they were in the fire, but Jesus was with them, and when they came out the only thing that had been burned was the ropes that bound them, other than that they didn't even smell like smoke. God will be there for you, take care of you, and when He's finished with you, than He'll receive you unto Himself. Perhaps through cancer, or auto-accident, or any # of ways, but until then, as you just walk in obedience to His word, you can trust the outcome of your life into His hands.

Vs1-6

Now there's obviously some time to be spent here in these vs and the 1st thing that strikes me is the reminder to us that Hezekiah is the son of Ahaz king of Judah. You say, "What's so striking about that?" The fact that Ahaz was one of the most-wicked kings that Judah ever had, and I'm just wondering how it is that such a wicked man produced such a righteous son? Of course we know that sometimes the opposite is just as true, some of the most godly of parents can have ungodly children, Hezekiah will be a case in point for that as well. His son that reigns after him (Manasseh) will be incredibly wicked, yet he was one of the best, one of the godliest kings Judah ever had. But it was interesting to me how that Ahaz had Hezekiah and they were just the antithesis of one another spiritually. Some people believe that Isaiah had much to do with Hezekiah and how he turned out in that he was on the scene during his dad's reign as well, probably spoke into his life in some sort of mentoring way. We see the mention of his mom's name in vs 2, could be that she feared the Lord, sought to instill in him that same sense of reverence for God, and need to honor Him. Hezekiah was able to see 1st hand how his dad's reign went, the decline of the nation of Israel, and how it just wasn't profitable in any sense of the word to neglect their relationship and responsibility to the Lord. But how important it is to seek to instill a sense of godly responsibility into our children, to train them up in the ways of the Lord. Our generation is so self-consumed; we're willing to do just about whatever it takes to get ahead in this life and in so doing we so often neglect the greater matters with regards to the eternal. We make all kinds of investments into the things of this world, and let slip through our hands the eternal investment God has called us to make into the lives of our children. And I suspect that if we'd just wake up and make a concerted effort to raise our kids after God's own heart that it wouldn't seem so random "win some lose some" kind of a pattern with the way our kids respond to Christ. But that we'd see them to do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

That's the testimony of Hezekiah, "He did what was right in the sight of the Lord (notice according to *all that his father David had done.*" What does that mean? That he was *perfect*? No, he was as human as you and me, had his faults, his frailties, his failures (David did to) but this speaks to the fact that his heart was *loyal* to God, that he had a *love* for God, and walked in *humility before* God. Perhaps you remember Amaziah back in ch 14, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet *not like* his father David, he served God in a legal sense, but not in a loving sense, he wasn't sold out fully to the Lord and that was his undoing, because he wasn't fully committed he wound up in compromise (which is a lesson in and of itself). But Hezekiah was committed *to* the Lord, had a heart *for* the Lord, spent time in worship *of* the Lord; consequently he was blessed *by* the Lord.

Vs 4 tells us (read). He removed any and everything that could be utilized in the pagan practices of idolatry, the high places, the sacred pillars, he cut down the wooden image and even broke in pieces the brass serpent that Moses fashioned in the wilderness because over the years the people began to burn incense to the thing and Hezekiah called it “Nehushtan” which means “thing of brass.” “It’s no god, its just a thing of brass that’s become a stumbling stone, get rid of it.” You remember the story, the children of Israel were complaining about the journey they were on, how sick of the worthless bread that they’d become (Num 21). And so the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, meaning that when they were bitten it was like being set on fire by the toxins of the snake and they began to die because of the snake bites. And so they came to Moses and said, “We’ve sinned against the Lord and against you, now pray to the Lord that He might take the serpents from among us.”

So Moses prayed and God said, “*Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.*’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” Num 21:8-9 Now as you may or may not know brass, in the scriptures is the metal of judgment; it speaks *of* or points *to* God’s judgment. The serpent being a picture of sin, and so the idea there was that God had heard their cry, their sin had been judged and as that picture was raised up of their sin having been judged, if they would look to and believe in the work that God had done in that or through that by faith, they’d live and not die. Now Jesus referred to that in John ch 3 when He was speaking to Nicodemus and He said, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*” John 3:14-15. And in that we discover that the whole issue with the bronze serpent and the pole was a foreshadowing and a picture of Jesus upon the cross. We realize that we’ve all been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin, and we’re all dying, the wages of sin is death. But our sin has been judged by God upon the cross of Jesus Christ The bible says, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” 2 Cor 5:21 So now, all that mankind has to do to live and not die, to have eternal life rather than eternal separation from God in hell is to look to Jesus, believe in Him, place our faith, our trust upon Him and we will be healed, that is forgiven of our sin, and the paralyzing, sterilizing and ultimately fatal effects of it.

But here’s Hezekiah, and if you ever wondered what happened to that bronze serpent, now you know. They kept it, no doubt placed it there in the temple, it was a testimony to the power of God, how that faith in Him, can restore and revive our lives. But over the years (700 yrs) the people began to not only memorialize it, they began to idolize it, burn incense to it, make a holy relic out of it. And thank God Hezekiah came along, broke the thing in pieces and said, “Nehushtan man, there’s no power in this thing, its just piece of brass, get your eyes off the serpent and on to the Savior, worship Him!” And I wonder how many things in our lives (we get so attached to things) and we place sentimental value on them, begin to memorialize them, and if we’re not careful we begin to idolize them.

And I wonder if we were to allow the Lord to take inventory of our lives, of our homes, how many things we'd be getting rid of because they've gotten in the way of our worship of God, we've place priority on the creation rather than the Creator who is blessed forevermore? We place sentimental value on this place of worship, but I'm excited to give it a wave offering, it's Nehushtan, its just sheetrock, metal, and wood, there's no spiritual value to it in and of itself whatsoever. Often the things we do for entertainment, our boats, guitars, golf clubs, our motorcycles, or whatever, Nehushtan, they can get in the way of the Lord. Sometimes it's a person whom God has used to touch our lives, be careful, they're human like you, don't worship them, worship God, let the Lord search your heart. See if there be anything practically, or a miss-priority perhaps relationally that needs reprioritized. Be careful not to love the world, or the things in the world, all that stuff is going to burn, place your priority in Jesus Christ seeking 1st the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, whatever that may mean for your personally, or practically, make it your priority, everything else is Nehushtan.

Hezekiah trusted the Lord God of Israel; (look at vs 5, read thru 6) no one before him and no one after him was like him, to me that's pretty incredible. (Obviously David reigned over the entire nation so that he's exempt from this statement) but what a witness to pass down, what a eulogy this would be at your funeral huh? "I never knew anyone who loved the Lord like _____ (fill in your name) and I suspect I'll never know anyone after them who's like them in their love/passion, dedication/devotion, and commitment to the Lord, they held fast to the Lord, and didn't depart from following the Lord. But kept His Word, and walked in His ways, all of the days of their life."

Vs 7-8

So like David he took Philistine territory, and God just prospered him wherever he went. I like that phrase there in vs 7, "The Lord was with him; and he prospered wherever he went." We just read how that he did what was *right* in the sight of the Lord, how that he *trusted* in the Lord, and now we read how that the Lord *was with him*, or to understand that another way, he drew near to God, and so God drew near to Him. That's what the bible says, "*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*" James 4:8 Repent of your ways, rededicate your life to God's ways and He'll be with you.

Now this word "Prospered" doesn't necessarily speak of monetarily (though God can certainly do that) but God can prosper you, or show you favor in any myriad of ways that we've never even stopped to consider. Perhaps He has prospered you with good health, how much is that worth to ya? If you're not having open-heart surgery, or no one is cutting a tumor out of your brain, than surely God has prospered you. This particular word points to wisdom, or insight, so that God prospered him in wisdom or understanding, he was able to reason things through and make generally wise decisions, God just prospered him in the area of understanding.

The bible says, *“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.”* Prov 3:13-18 So God’s favor was really at rest upon Hezekiah’s life.

Vs9-12

We commented on this last week in ch 17, but you might draw attention to vs 12, it’s key. They didn’t obey God’s voice, they transgressed against His covenant, they wouldn’t hear, or heed the commandments. They lived like the world around them and they received the same reward, that’s what we spoke about last time. Don’t think that you can live *like* the world and escape the outcome *of* the world.

Vs13-16

Now this wasn’t wise, God had given him wisdom and he obviously didn’t utilize it here. But even Solomon did some stupid things and look at the wisdom God gave him! But like we’ve said before just because God has gifted you in a certain area, that doesn’t mean that we’re always going to be responsible to utilize the gifts God has given us, always walking in the Spirit and never acting out in the flesh. God had favored him with understanding but in a frantic panic here he just lashes out in the flesh and tries to buy Sennacherib off. It was his dad Shalmaneser who’d taken Israel captive, and now he’s ascended into the throne, perhaps that’s when he responded in rebelling against Assyria, no longer paying tribute to him. But when he responded, Sennacherib reacted and now he’s breathing hard down Hezekiah’s neck. And Hezekiah is all “...hehehehe... just kidding about that whole, ‘I’m not going to pay you anymore’” thing, what was that price again?” Sennacherib says, “11 tons of silver, and 1 ton of gold.” You can do the math on your own, but no doubt hundreds of millions of dollars. Hezekiah doesn’t have that kinda cash, so he’s reduced to stripping the doors and the pillars from the temple that he’d restored and refurbished to try and pay off the enemy. How often people think that money is the answer, that they can buy there way out, and unfortunately in our society that’s often times true. But with God it doesn’t work that way, money can’t always pay off your problems. Hezekiah sought to buy his way out, pay off the enemy, but you’ll find that if you give the enemy an inch, he wants a mile, all this does is wet his appetite, he sees this willingness to compromise as an open door for a full on assault, remember that.

Once you’re willing to bargain with the enemy to make your life a little easier, he’ll capitalize on that and come in like a flood, the “weak sheep” alarm will begin to sound and all the wolves will begin to descend upon, and narrow in on you. You just can’t give in, that’s why when you read Eph 6 about the whole armor of God, you find it’s all full frontal gear, nothing on the back, because in Christ it’s no retreat, no surrender, having done all to stand, you stand. Having your waist girded in truth, you’ve put on the breastplate of righteousness, you’ve shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, you’ve taken up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

And beyond all that, you pray. You just don't read there that there comes a time when you may have to strike a bargain, fall back, give him some ground, buy him off, no way, the kingdom of God is on the offense, no retreat, no surrender, Hezekiah made a mistake here.

But this is what I was referring to earlier; does this somehow diminish his love for God, or his loyalty to God? No, he made a mistake, he'll repent and move on, and that's what we're to do. We'll make mistakes, repent, and keep moving forward with the Lord, don't take the mentality, "Well, I've already blown it, may as well throw in the whole towel now." No way, repent and keep moving forward with Jesus Christ But notice now how the enemy wants to capitalize on this sign of seeming weakness in Hezekiah.

Vs17-21

Now where exactly he's getting his information I'm not sure, I read somewhere in some commentary that there'd been a confederation of nations that they were apart of to rebel against Assyria and that Egypt and Judah were the only ones left that hadn't fallen. I can't verify that for you tonight, I suppose it's a possibility. But Hezekiah didn't trust in man, he trusted in the Lord, and it's just as likely that Sennacherib simply interpreted his refusal to pay him as a declaration of war, and he's trying to convince Hezekiah that there isn't anyone or anything that's going to be able to assist him in his defiance against Assyria. Now Hezekiah sought to pay Assyria but as I said, that was the inch, now they're looking for the mile. So he tells him that there's no one politically that can help him, now he says, don't think that the power of your God personally will help you either.

Vs22

The bible says, "*...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" 1 Cor 2:14 It's amazing how people in the world seek to mock or undermine your worship or understand, or why you obey the word when the fact of the matter is, they don't have a clue. The Rabshakeh (which is some sort of dignified title) says, "If (by the way) you're thinking your God will bail you out, look what Hezekiah has done, he's removed all the altars and high places from which you worshipped Him." The implication being, "After an insult like that, He's not going to do a thing for you." But this guy doesn't have clue regarding what God's word says, everyone of those altars, and high places was a display of sin, rebellion or idolatry, God had said that they were to all be destroyed, that they were to worship in Jerusalem and Hezekiah had in reality honored the Lord, and kept His word in doing what he'd done. Sometimes people don't understand why you do what you do, perhaps you give your heart to Christ, and the buddy you've been partying with suddenly doesn't understand why you're not hanging around them anymore. "Oh, (he might say) that's real loving, real Christian like to just blow me off." But in reality you're blowing them off is an act of obedience to the Word of God that says we're to make no provision for the flesh, or what fellowship has light with darkness, or how that bad company corrupts good morals.

In trying to undermine their position, all this guy is doing is displaying his own ignorance of the word and ways of God.

Vs23-24

He's just demoralizing them, "Give me what you can, we'll give you 2,000 horses (if you can even put riders on them) and then we'll send our weakest captain against you, and you'll still be getting swatted like flies."

Vs25

Your own God has told us to destroy this place, He's forsaken you, its judgment time.

Vs26-35

So Hezekiah's guys say, "Let's negotiate in Aramaic, there's no need to bring all these people in on it." So Rabshakeh turns it up, begins to yell all the louder in Hebrew, how that they deserve to hear it since they'll be suffering right along with them. And he seeks to use the scare tactic, terrorism techniques in order to secure surrender, promises them the good life if they come with them, death, dismemberment, and the eating and drinking of their own waste if they stay. And the most lethal blow was probably there in vs 34 when he brought up the fact that Samaria's God didn't help them because Judah's God was Samaria's God, the only true God. But as to where they were blowing life, Judah is in the midst of revival, they've turned to the Lord, the Lord is with them, He wasn't with Samaria.

But super quick notice the 3 points of the enemy's persuasion. #1 Vs 31 He promised prosperity, "Join my side and you'll each have your own vine, your own fig tree. Health and wealth will be yours." #2 Vs 32 He denied that they would die, and guaranteed that they'd live, but that if they listened to the word of Hezekiah they'd only miss out. And #3 Vs 33-35 He caused them to question their Creator, "Has any god delivered from our hands, yours will be no exception, they haven't delivered and neither will the Lord." Why do I bring this up? Because it's the same old ploy the enemy always uses just wrapped up in a different package. These were the 3 areas of attack in the garden (in a different order, but all the same) He promised prosperity, (You'll be like God), denied that they'd die, "You will not surely die if you eat of the fruit." And he caused them to question their Creator, "Has God said you shall not eat?" and He put a question mark in Eve's mind. But as to where Eve engaged the enemy verbally, on the plain the rationale and was quickly and soundly defeated, notice what happened here, what's the practical application for you and me when the enemy seeks to lure us on the level of prosperity, denies to us that it'll damage and destroy us, causes us to question the Lord?

Vs36-37

Hey, you're free to take your distresses to the king, and rend your clothes (spiritually) before Him, but when it comes to your enemy... "Answer him not a word." What's the King's command? "**Do not answer him.**" Eve engaged him, and fell radically, these men refused to answer him, and you wait, you watch, and you'll see that God will fight for them. Don't get so anxious to engage the enemy on that level, how many people go on witch hunts, looking for the devil to rebuke in any and everything. I don't see that biblically, always best to keep Jesus between you and the enemy, just hold your peace and do not answer him, let God fight for you.

Prayer Points: Lord thank You that You are well able to fight for us, help us to remember that and be mindful of that. Help us to recognize the warfare, to put on every aspect of the armor that You've allowed for us, no retreat, no surrender. And help us to trust in You, to hold fast to You, and not depart from following after You, doing what is right in Your sight, drawing near to You, that You might draw near to us, that You might prosper us Lord, wherever we go, for Your name's sake and for Your glory.