

“Flattery”
2 Kings 20:12-21
(Preached at Trinity, October 23, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The first part of **Chapter 20** covers Hezekiah's mortal illness. His sickness involved some sort of infection caused by a boil. He was dying and he knew it.
 - A. It was affirmed by the Prophet Isaiah:
2 Kings 20:1 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'"
 - B. Hezekiah humbled himself and prayed and God heard his prayer and granted him an additional 15 years of life.
2 Kings 20:5-6 NAU - "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. ⁶ "I will add fifteen years to your life"
2. Hezekiah's healing apparently became well-known and we read that a delegation was sent from Berodach-baladan, the king of Babylon. This was not insignificant knowing the great distance from Jerusalem to Babylon – over 1600 miles. They came bearing a gift in celebration of his healing.
 - A. The date is described with the phrase, “At that time” referring to the time following Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. Most likely, chronologically this precedes the attack by Sennacherib which would explain how Judah at this time seems to have great wealth.
Remember, Hezekiah stripped much of the wealth of Jerusalem to pay off Sennacherib. See **2 Kings 18:13-16**
 - B. It is also possible, however, that Hezekiah possessed such abundance that even after paying off Sennacherib his wealth was worthy of putting on display before the Babylonians.
3. Having heard of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, the king of Babylon sends his congratulations with a gift but his motives were purely political. It is hard to imagine Judah and Babylon as allies, especially knowing what would happen in the future. At this time, however, both were struggling under the domination of the Assyrians. Babylon had been conquered by Tiglath-Pileser in 745 BC. Perhaps Berodach-baladan hoped to use this opportunity to form an alliance with Hezekiah for a mutual resistance against Assyria.
4. Hezekiah was flattered at being courted by someone as famous as the king of Babylon.
2 Kings 20:13 NAU - "Hezekiah listened to them,"
 - A. In other words, he was taken away by their flattery.
 - B. He did everything in his power to impress his distinguished visitors.
“and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.”

5. Hezekiah's problem is that he had forgotten the God who delivered him.
2 Chronicles 32:24-25 NAU - "In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill; and he prayed to the LORD, and the LORD spoke to him and gave him a sign. ²⁵ But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem."
6. In showing off all of his treasures Hezekiah demonstrated vanity and pride.
Verses 14-15 – Isaiah came to Hezekiah as a messenger from God.
 Hezekiah must have immediately known his folly. He answers humbly and honestly but didn't comprehend the full weight of his sin.
 Hezekiah had received flattery from what would become Israel's great enemy. And he had failed to trust in God alone. Just as it was wrong to look to Egypt, it was wrong to look to Babylon.
7. Babylon had come to spy out the land, and Hezekiah showed them everything.
 Just as Hezekiah had shown Babylon all the treasures of Jerusalem, all would be carried away by Babylon.
2 Kings 20:17 NAU - "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left," says the LORD."
8. **2 Kings 20:18 NAU** - "Some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away; and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon."
 This this was presumably prophesied before Hezekiah had any children since Manasseh was 12 when he began to rule. He was conceived during Hezekiah's 15-year extension of his life.
2 Kings 20:21 NAU - "So Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son became king in his place."
2 Kings 21:1 NAU - "Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah."
9. **Verse 19** – Hezekiah's true heart is once again made manifest.
2 Kings 20:19 NAU - "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good."
 The news he heard from Isaiah was terrible, yet he received it as good. He received it as just. He had been guilty of proudly receiving the flattery of the Babylonians.
 Hezekiah acknowledges both the truth of the prophecy and the mercy in the delay of its fulfillment.
10. Hezekiah had fallen under the temptation that we all must guard against. The love of flattery. Our hearts love to hear the praise of men. And we must also guard against deceitfully using flattery for selfish gain.
 Tonight, I want us to look at the danger of flattery – both of giving it and receiving it.

- I. We must beware of the sin of *having* a flattering tongue
- A. Of flattering other men
1. This is a sin of deception - Flattery is dishonest.
 2. Flattery exposes a low view of our fellow man.
 - a. The flatterer is just using people for his own personal gain
 - b. Often it exposes his own personal insecurity
 - c. While using sweet flattering words we are actually demonstrating contempt for the other person because we are not truly looking out for their good. We only have an eye upon what they can do for us.
Proverbs 26:28 NAU - "A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin."
 - d. Flattery is usually two-edged.
The flatterer gives compliments to the face and then criticism behind their backs. Someone who constantly berates others to you is probably berating you to others – Beware of their flattery.
 3. We must never show partiality to individuals because of their wealth or position or what they might be able to do for us.
- B. We must beware of flattering ourselves
By thinking we are better than we are so that our sin is covered
Psalm 36:1-2 NAU - "Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For it flatters him in his *own* eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it*."
Psalm 36:2 CSBO - "for in his own eyes he flatters himself *too much* to discover and hate his sin."
1. We are often prone to justify our actions – often the same things we condemn in others.
 2. We compliment ourselves on some small deed while leaving a thousand undone.
- C. We must beware of attempting to flatter God
1. When we praise him with a hidden agenda
We're just using Him for personal gain.
 2. When we are dishonest with our pledges of commitment
Psalm 78:35-36 NAU - "And they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer. ³⁶ But they deceived Him with their mouth And lied to Him with their tongue."
 - a. Countless multitudes boast of their great love for God but have no intention of serving Him.
 - b. It's mere lip service.
Matthew 15:8 NAU - "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me."

II. We must not seek flattery from others.

- A. The love for the compliments of men is caused by our own pride.
1. This was the sin of Hezekiah
 - a. He was proud to show off his possessions.
 - b. It probably started off innocently. They made some flattering compliment about some object and Hezekiah became puffed up and proudly showed them more . . . and more.
 2. For most people this is the chief motivation of owning material things.
 - a. Why do many people desire certain car models?
 - b. Why is it better to wear name brand fashion clothes?
 3. This has always been a danger for pastors.
2 Timothy 4:2-3 NAS - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires"
 The people have their ears tickled. What to the pastors get? They get the praise of men.
- B. The sin of desiring flattery is caused by a dissatisfaction with God.
1. God ceases to be the supreme object of your delight and you begin to seek after the praise of men
 2. This is the chief reason we are not more effective in our witness – we desire to be well thought of. We cannot stand the thought of being rejected. We are secretly flattery seekers.
John 12:42-43 NAU - "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."

III. Not only must we not seek flattery, we must be careful not to receive it.

- A. There is a great difference between a compliment and empty flattery.
1. We should be wise to distinguish between the two. There is a difference between sincerity and deceit or deception.
 We should encourage and compliment one another.
 2. A compliment is genuine, flattery is empty of love and concern.
 Flattery is deceiving, bewitching, enchanting, captivating, entertaining.
- B. The difference between a compliment and flattery often has much to do with the condition of our own heart.
1. Often an innocent compliment can be received as flattery.
 2. We must learn to receive compliments without being flattered by them. A compliment can quickly tickle our pride.
 Hezekiah's pride may have been stirred by a simple compliment that was received as flattery.

3. This demands the searching and examining of our own motives. This is particularly true with regards to our Christian service. What is it that motivates your service? Is it the praise of men?

Our only motive should be the glory of God.

Matthew 6:2 NAU - "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full."

- C. God will often use circumstances to try our faith.
 - 2 Chronicles 32:31 NAU** - "Even *in the matter of* the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him *alone only* to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart."
 1. Matthew Henry – "If God love us, he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the pride of his heart and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to *prove him, that he might know all that was in his heart*, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it."¹
 2. And we are reminded once again, it isn't necessary that others know all of your business.

Conclusion:

1. God promises to judge the sin of flattery
 - A. Those who give flattery

Psalms 12:2-3 NAU - "They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak. ³ May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, The tongue that speaks great things;"
 - B. Those who seek flattery

Matthew 6:1 NAU - "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."
2. May we be continually on guard against this subtle sin. We naturally love to hear the praise of men. Pray that God might grant you the grace to seek His praise alone.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1149.