

“The Faithfulness of Hezekiah”
2 Kings 18:1-8
(Preached at Trinity, August 21, 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. 1 & 2 Kings can be divided into three parts.
Part 1 contains the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon
Part 2 records the history of Israel after the death of Solomon and the foolishness of his son, Rehoboam which led to the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom excelled in wickedness and were finally destroyed.
Part 3 begins with **Chapter 18** and focuses on the surviving Kingdom of Judah with Hezekiah as the first king.
2. In the previous chapter we witnessed the downfall of Israel as Samaria fell to the Assyrians. God had demonstrated great forbearance and endured with their wickedness for many years.
 - A. He sent prophets to warn them but they would not listen.
2 Kings 17:14 NAU - "However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God."
 - B. They continued to forsake God's Law and continued their idolatry.
2 Kings 17:16 NAU - "They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal."
 - C. Finally the hammer of God's judgment fell. Samaria was captured.
2 Kings 17:18 NAU - "So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah."
3. As we enter **Chapter 18** the author now puts the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in the context of the Southern Kingdom. It took place in the sixth year of King Hezekiah.
2 Kings 18:9-12 NAU - "Now in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. ¹⁰ At the end of three years they captured it; in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was captured. ¹¹ Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and put them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, ¹² because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant, *even* all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded; they would neither listen nor do *it*."
4. The first verses of **Chapter 18** serve as an introduction to Hezekiah. After seeing the wickedness of Israel's kings it is refreshing to read of the great contrast of this king in Judah.
2 Kings 18:3 NAU - "He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done."

5. He is given great significance in the pages of the Old Testament.
- A. The first thing we read is the identity of his father. His father was Ahaz, the son of Jotham, grandson of Uzziah. Of Ahaz we read that he was wicked. In fact, he was particularly wicked.
2 Kings 16:2-4 NAU - "he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David *had done*.³ But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel.⁴ He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree."
- B. Although his father was the epitome of wickedness, Hezekiah was a model of God's grace. He was nine years old when his father became king. Throughout his teenage years he watched the wickedness of his father, yet he did not set his heart on his father's wickedness.
 Unlike Ahaz, when Hezekiah came to the throne he set his heart on removing from the kingdom all that was not honoring to God and restoring God's worship. He was the most David-like king since David. It was almost as though David had returned to the throne.
- C. He was so thorough he destroyed the brazen serpent dating back to the days of Moses.
2 Kings 18:4 NAU - "He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan."
Numbers 21:5-9 NAU - "The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."⁶ The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.⁷ So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people.⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live."⁹ And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived."
1. Human beings are readily given over to idolatry. Religious men feel most comfortable when they have some visible, tangible object upon which to look. One reason God did not allow Moses to have a tomb is the Israelites would have never left it. It would have become a shrine.
Deuteronomy 34:6 NAU - "He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day."
 2. Israel was worshipping the bronze snake on a stake. They were burning incense to it as a sacred relic.

3. God will not allow anything to interfere to His spiritual worship.
Exodus 20:4-5 KJV - "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: ⁵
 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them"
 5. The author gives us several qualities of this godly king.
- I. "He did right in the sight of God"
- A. The word refers to something straight or level
 1. In the construction world it would be the opposite of something that is out of plumb or crooked.
 2. Hezekiah's life was characterized as that which was correct, straight. It was a righteous life.
 3. This is the kind of life God demands of us all.
Deuteronomy 6:18 NAU - "You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to *give your fathers,*"
 4. This was God's charge to Joshua at the beginning of the conquest of Canaan—maintain the straight course of obedience to the Law.
Joshua 1:7-8 NAU - "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. ⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."
 - B. This is the type of life necessary to finish well
 1. It stays on course
 Paul said at the end of his days:
2 Timothy 4:7 NAU - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"
 2. Hezekiah tore down the high places, broke down the Asherah idols, and even destroyed the bronze serpent. He was zealous in the worship of God, zealous in serving God, in honoring God.
 May each of us live such a life, doing right in the sight of God.

II. Hezekiah trusted God

- A. This is the high mark that characterizes God's people
1. This is the chief characteristic lacking in the lost. They are called unbelievers. It is a heart problem. They do not trust God.
 2. All of Israel's kings were faithless except for a select few.
 - a. David was a man of faith.
1 Samuel 17:46-47 NAU - "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands."
 - b. Josiah was also a king who trusted God.
2 Chronicles 34:2-3 NAU - "He did right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³ For in the eighth year of his reign while he was still a youth, he began to seek the God of his father David;"
 - c. Jehoshaphat was another faithful king
2 Chronicles 17:3-4 NAU - "The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father David's earlier days and did not seek the Baals, ⁴ but sought the God of his father, followed His commandments, and did not act as Israel did."
 3. Hezekiah was probably a student of the Word of God. It is also likely he was influenced by the prophet Isaiah. He believed God's Word and rested upon God's promises.
- B. Trusting God is not speaking mere words or making bold claims
1. Our nation's motto is "In God we trust." It is written on our currency. It is carved on a stone marker at one of the entrances of our Nation's Capital. But we are not a people who trust God.
 2. Trusting God demands bold action and absolute confidence. Like all men, Hezekiah was subject to fear that sometimes leads us to rely on our own wisdom. When the Assyrians turned to attack Jerusalem after destroying Samaria Hezekiah stripped the wealth of the Temple to purchase relief.
2 Kings 18:14-16 NAU - "Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵ Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver which was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house. ¹⁶ At that time Hezekiah cut off *the gold from* the doors of the temple of the LORD, and *from* the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria."

3. We must understand the severity and cruelty of the Assyrians.
One commentator writes:
“*The king* recorded in his annals how he had flayed captive kings alive, dressing pillars with their skins. And he took delight in describing how he had walled up other kings to die of hunger and thirst. Princes had been impaled on stakes. He also had boys and girls burned alive; put out the eyes of the leaders of captive nations; cut off the hands and feet, ears and noses of able-bodied men; and pulled out the tongues of those who dared speak out against him. Sargon and Sennacherib were no less cruel.”¹
4. The Godly man Hezekiah, however, found his ultimate confidence in God. Isaiah wrote how the King of Assyria mocked God and taunted Hezekiah.
Isaiah 36:14-16 NAU - "Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; ¹⁵ nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us, this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' ¹⁶ 'Do not listen to Hezekiah,' for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me'"
5. Hezekiah's response:
Isaiah 37:15-16 NAU - "Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying, ¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth."
Isaiah 37:20 NAU - "Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God."

- III. Hezekiah maintained steadfast commitment towards God
2 Kings 18:6 NAU - "For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses."
- A. “Clung” (צָלַף) – join together, hold fast
 1. The word was used to describe the marital union
Genesis 2:24 NAU - "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." - cleave
 2. It was used to describe Ruth's commitment to Naomi
Ruth 1:14 NAU - "And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her."
 3. Hezekiah was steadfast in his commitment to God.
 - B. This is the nature of Christianity
 1. It demands absolute, steadfast commitment to Christ
Matthew 16:24 NAU - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."
 2. This is only possible by His transforming grace.

¹ Cyril J. Barber, *The Books of Kings: The Righteousness of God Illustrated in the Lives of the People of Israel and Judah*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 420–421.

Conclusion

1. Hezekiah's faithfulness had a profound impact upon the people. He sent messengers calling them to worship. They gathered to celebrate the Passover. We should note he sent messengers to both Judah and Israel. Most of the Israelites ignored the messengers, but some gathered in Jerusalem, and they did not return. **2 Chronicles 30:1-2 NAU** - "Now Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel. ² For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month," **2 Chronicles 30:6 NAU** - "The couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes, even according to the command of the king, saying, "O sons of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped *and* are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria." **2 Chronicles 30:10-13 NAU** - "So the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. ¹¹ Nevertheless some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. ¹² The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD. ¹³ Now many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very large assembly."
2. Hezekiah's actions were bold and courageous. He tore down the high places, destroyed idols, even ground up the sacred bronze serpent. He must have faced opposition but he pressed on to the glory of God.
3. We need more Hezekiahs today, particularly those in spiritual leadership. God's people today must give themselves to doing what is right in the eyes of God. They must be people who trust God. This is especially true during times of difficulty. They must also cleave to God, holding fast to Him with unwavering resolve.
4. Are you that person today? Even in the face of great difficulty, will you follow our great God?