

## Sabbath School Lesson

### Faithfulness: A Character Study of Hezekiah, the King

**By**

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#### Introduction

Godly character is a prerequisite for all those who wish to serve God and serve Him in truth. But where is character without faithfulness? The LORD says in Ps 101:6 through King David: "Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve Me" (cf. 2 Chron. 16:9).

Faithfulness, then, is at the heart of godly character. Known in Hebrew as "*kun*" (Strong's #3559), faithfulness basically means "to be erect (that is, stand perpendicular) or upright, be stable, be established or be secure" in Hebrew thought. Faithfulness, therefore, is all about being sincere and steady in uprightness and in one's godly life or righteous walk with God.

Sadly, faithfulness is not a trait that comes easily or naturally to people; fallen mankind is generally faithless and, indeed, "the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Ps 12:1). Proverbs 20:6 asks: "a faithful man who can find?"

Will you be that elusive "faithful man"?

Faithfulness is especially required of God's ministers (1 Cor. 4:2; 2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:2) and of their wives (1 Tim. 3:11) and children (Tit. 1:6). But it is also expected of all believers (Col. 1:2; 1 Tim. 6:2; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Rev. 17:14).

One hero of the faith who is without doubt a 'star' in godly faithfulness is King Hezekiah of the ancient Biblical Kingdom of Judah. The story of his life overflows with faithfulness at every turn. He could be said to be godliness personified, earning the distinction of being one of the most celebrated devout kings of Judah alongside King Josiah (compare 2 Kings 18:5 & 23:25).

The life of King Hezekiah recorded in the scriptures speaks powerfully to us about the righteous choices still available to us today as opposed to the evil choices so many make in these last days of evil, with the result that faithfulness is now a scarce, if not an extinct, commodity (Eph. 5:16; 2 Tim. 3:1-4). He's a true hero to emulate!

So, come on board as we try to relive the righteous life of King Hezekiah "written [down] for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4 *ESV*). Amen!

## **A Life Distinguished by Godliness**

Hezekiah was the 15<sup>th</sup> King of Judah from the line of David. The royal chronicle describes his life and reign as follows:

“Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, King of Judah, began to reign.

“He was twenty-five years old when he became King, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah.

“And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father David had done.

“He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

“He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the Kings of Judah, nor who were before him.

“For he held fast to the LORD, he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.

“The LORD was with him; He prospered him wherever he went” (2 Kings 18:1-7 NKJV).

Is this glowing account of the life of King Hezekiah, said to be without an equal in godly fear among all the Kings of Judah, an accurate portrayal of the faithful life he lived in obedience and service to God? What decisions and actions did he take? What was his attitude towards the LORD? What were the challenges of his time and how did he respond to them? Can we know the secret of his success? What lessons might we learn? These are the questions we will set out to answer in this study.

### **A lover of God and His Way**

Though a youth (25years) when he ascended the throne, Hezekiah did not give free rein to the usual impulses of youthful exuberance. He remembered his Creator in the days of his youth (Eccl 12:1; 2 Tim 2:22) and expended his energy and the resources of his office restoring true worship in the land.

Burning with zeal for the Lord God of Israel, he destroyed all the high places and sacred pillars including the bronze serpent (Nethustan) which the people used as objects of worship. Hezekiah was not the first reformer-king to remove the high places (see 2 Chron. 17:6, 34:3-7), but he was the first king to remove in addition those high places purportedly dedicated to the Lord (2 kings 18:22). Thus he ensured that the true worship of God was centralized in the temple at Jerusalem as the Lord directed (Deut. 12:5, 11; 2 Chron. 6:6, 7:16; compare Num 33:52; Deut. 12:3).

Where the great and wise King Solomon had been ensnared, Hezekiah was careful not to tread. Solomon, for all his wisdom and love for the Lord, still sacrificed on the high places even after he built the temple. This and his inordinate desire for idolatrous, foreign women were his ruin (1 Kings 3: 2-3, 11: 1-9)

In removing the high places in totality, King Hezekiah fulfilled the Biblical command to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess 5:22) and to “follow not that which is evil, but that which is good” (3 John 1: 11). The life stories of the personalities of the Bible have been preserved for us so “that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted”. Yes, “they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:6-11 *NKJV*).

So don't compromise in any area of righteousness; don't meet evil halfway. Stand for righteousness in its totality. With zeal, confront evil and seek to uproot it as God commands.

In his great love for the Lord, Hezekiah put God first in everything. When he became King, the temple had been closed by his father, apostate King Ahaz (2 Chron, 28:24) and the true worship of Yahweh was in tatters. The priesthood was even in disarray. He didn't hesitate to put things right.

In the very first year of his reign, in the first month, he “opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them [overlaying them with gold – 2 Kings 18:16]. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place” (2 Chron. 29:3-5).

The work of God was his priority. He sought first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and the Lord added to him all the other blessings of life (Matt 6:33). Yet, how often we put our personal interests first! In Php. 2:20-21, the apostle Paul complains, singling out Timothy who was equally committed to the service of the gospel: “all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

This was the mistake of the post-exilic nation of Judah. Having returned not long ago from captivity in Babylon, the people were more interested in seeing to their personal comfort than in rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem. Through the prophet Haggai, the Lord complained:

“This people say, the time is not come the time that the LORD's house should be built.

“Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet saying,

“It is time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

“Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways.

“Ye have sown much, and bring in little, ye eat, but ye have not enough, ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye cloth you, but there is none warm, and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

“Thus said the LORD of hosts; consider your ways.

“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

“Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

“Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from [i.e. withholds] her fruit.

“And I called for drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands” (Hag. 1:2-11).

When we fail to put God first, we fail to acknowledge that it’s the LORD God who “gives us power to get wealth that He may establish His covenant with us” (Deut. 8:18).

### **The Lord Rewards Faithfulness and Punishes Evil**

Apart from his love for God, one practical reason that motivated Hezekiah to re-institute the true worship of God was the recognition that disobedience provokes divine retribution. In calling on the priests to reorganize and sanctify themselves, he confessed that “our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. Now it is in mine to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn from us” (2 Chron. 29: 6-10).

In every generation, “the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lords is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12). The was the truth the apostle Peter rejoiced in as he preached the gospel to the household of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to Christianity:

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.

“But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:34-35; see also Luke 1:50).

“God is no respecter of persons”, but He makes an exception in the case of the righteous! He accepts Him wholeheartedly and saves him. Are you ready to be singled out as a righteous person in a world that lies in wickedness? Will you be a Noah of your generation in emulation of the original Noah who was “a just man *and* perfect in his generation” (Gen. 6:9, 7:1)?

### **When a People Prepare their Hearts unto the LORD, His Glory Appears**

One of the strong points of Hezekiah was his wholehearted love for God and obedience to His will. 2 Chron. 31:21 says of him: “And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered”.

An influential leader, this was a characteristic of Hezekiah that infected the people as he led the nation in the fear of God. We read in 2 Chron. 30:12-20:

“Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD.

“Now many people, a very great assembly gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

“They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast them into the Brook Kidron.

“Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LORD.

“They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses, the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood received from the hand of the Levites.

“For they were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore, the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD.

“For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying “Many the good LORD provide atonement for everyone. “Who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleaned according to the purification of the sanctuary’ [see Lev. 7:20 ; Deut 12:15].

“And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people” (NKJV).

The result was marvelous:

“So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

“Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven” (2 Chron 30:26-27 NKJV).

King Hezekiah epitomized what the Lord expects of all His children- to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength (Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:30). This wholehearted, unreserved love for God is expressed through the keeping of His commandments. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us in John 14:15: “If ye love Me, Keep My commandments”.

Hezekiah did love the Lord and expressed it by keeping His commandments, in that “he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses” (2 King 18:6)

### **An Example of Righteousness**

The exemplary life a person lives can be a powerful force for change. This was the case with King Hezekiah. He set a personal example of godliness for his citizens to emulate. So that his people might follow suit, King Hezekiah earmarked a portion of his substance for the burnt offerings in the temple:

“He appointed also the King’s portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, that is, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD.

“Moreover he commanded the people that dwell in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the Law of the LORD.

“And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the fields, and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly.

“And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps.

“In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month.

“And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and His people Israel.

“Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

“And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty for the LORD hath blessed His people, and that which is left is this great store” (2 Chron. 31:3-10).

The faithfulness of Hezekiah was thorough; he didn't pick and choose which commandments of God to obey. Moreover, he made sure his people emulated him.

In leading his people to bring offerings to the LORD out of a sincere and grateful heart, Hezekiah recognized that all blessing flow from God (Prov. 10:22; 1 Chron. 29:11-12; 1 Tim. 6:17) and that we ought to honour Him with the blessings He gives us.

Wise King Solomon advises:

“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.

“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Prov. 3: 9-10).

In Ps 50, the LORD says He desires our offerings only as a token of our gratitude to Him, for “the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1):

“Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

“I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me.

“I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

“For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

“I know all the fowls of the mountains and the wild beasts of the field are Mine.

“If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof.

“Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

“Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High.

“And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” (Ps 50: 7-15).

As in verse 23 of Ps 50, verses 14-15 establish a relationship between thanks offering and God's deliverance of the righteous in “the day of trouble”

Was this true in the life of Hezekiah? Later events in his life will tell.

But more than giving offerings to God in acknowledgement of His goodness, Hezekiah also knew a secret of blessing we will do well to practice: Holy things must be put to holy use!

In 2 Chron. 31: 4 we learn that Hezekiah did not neglect “to give the portion of the priests and the Levites”. The share due the priests and the Levites has been declared holy by the LORD in His law:

“And all the tithes of the land whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’S it is HOLY [i.e. set apart] unto the LORD” (Lev. 27:30).

“And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance [or share] for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Numbers 18:21).

“All the tithes of the land belongs to the LORD”. That is why we rob God when we take tithes which is His for our personal use:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me, But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.

“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

“And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, said the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 3:8-12).

The question is directed at you: ‘Will you rob God in tithes and offerings?’ If the answer is ‘yes’, understand what is at stake—your blessing and prosperity! You will be “cursed with a curse” and that by the Almighty Himself for ‘robbing’ Him. That’s the scariest of it of all! God withdraws His hand of blessing and allows curses to run riot in your life and business.

But you could simply change all that by refraining from robbing Him of His tithes and offerings! If you do this, the LORD commits Himself to bless you, thereby putting His credibility on the line: “Test Me by faithfully paying your tithes and offerings, and I will demonstrate that I am able to bless and make you prosperous beyond your wildest expectations! You ask Me, ‘how’? In addition to My directly opening up opportunities for you to receive abundant blessings, I will stop the risks peculiar to your particular line of business from affecting you, for instance, pests from destroying your crops if you are a farmer. And I will so bless you that all the people around you will acknowledge you as a blessed person and find you a delight.’

Will the LORD of all the earth not make good His promise? If you refuse to give out tithes and offerings for fear of incurring a loss or financial difficulty, you stand accused of disbelieving God and making Him a liar (1 John 5:10). Now, how do you answer that charge? You had better believe the LORD, and He will surely fulfill His word in your life: “Blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (Luke 1:45).

Accordingly, when King Hezekiah treated holy things as holy and did not rob God of His tithes and offerings, he received the promised blessings in due time:

“Hezekiah had very great riches and honour. And he made himself treasuries of silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, and for all kinds of desirable items;

“Storehouse for the harvest of grain, wine and oil; and stalls for all kinds of livestock, and folds for flocks.

“Moreover he provided cities for himself, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much property” (2 Chron. 32:27-29 NKJV cp Luke 6:38).

By his godly leadership, Hezekiah observed the Biblical principle of leadership by example. Thus he fulfilled the Divine charge given to the Kings of Israel to serve as examples of modesty, justice and godliness for the citizenry. Anticipating that the Israelites would someday desire human kings, God through Moses laid down basic rules to guide the selection of kings as well as their conduct in office:

“When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a King over me like as all the nations that are about me;

“Thou shalt in any wise set him King over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose, *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set King over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

“But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

“Neither shall he multiply wives to himself that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

“And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his Kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in book out of that which is before the priests and the Levites.

“And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.

“That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his Kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel”(vv. 14-20).

People in positions of authority are not at liberty to live their lives any how; they are obliged to live lives worthy of emulation. Believing parents, for instance, are to set a good example for their children. God spoke concerning Abraham, the father of the faithful:

“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him “(Gen 18:18-19; compare Matt. 3:9; John 8:39; Rom. 4:12).

Timothy, that young, faithful minister groomed by Paul, had a godly mother and grandmother who weaned and nurtured him on the word. That was why from childhood he knew “the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).



It was a godly heritage passed down from grandmother to mother and from mother to son. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy recalling “the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that [is] in thee also” (2 Tim.1:5; see Acts 16:1).

Parents, and particularly fathers, are not to provoke their children by being overbearing and unreasonable in their demands (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).

Rather they are to bring up their children in the fear of God, first, by their own personal example and then by passing on godly instructions to their children and grandchildren (Deut. 4:9, 11:18-19; Prov. 22:6, 23:13).

Although the Lord states in Ezekiel 18:20 that the son shall not bear the guilt of the father nor the son the guilt of the father, parents need to be wary of the divine warning in Ex 20:5-6, “ ... I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments” (NKJV).

The LORD may well visit the iniquity of a father on his son not merely because of the relationship, but because the son may have in all likelihood followed in the footsteps of the father. The chances of a child learning the ungodly ways of his/her parent(s) are very high.

So parents be wary, for “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them” (Ps 103:17-18). Of the children of the righteous, the Psalmist wrote: “The children of thy servants shall continue [now and in the world to come], and their seed shall be established before thee” (Ps 102: 28).

Another category of people in leadership positions who must especially live exemplary lives are the ministers of God. They must be above reproach. They are to teach others both by their lifestyle and by the sound doctrine. The apostle Paul admonished Timothy:

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16; compare 1 Peter 5:1-4 & 1 Cor. 9: 27).

In 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Paul outlines the godly, blameless life Overseers or Pastors must live and that of deacons in verses 8-13 (see also 2 Tm 2:24-26).

The life of King Hezekiah speaks of a man who single-handedly turned around the spiritual and social fortunes of a nation for the better by the sheer force of his character. Likewise, we should positively affect the lives of the people around us to the glory of our heavenly Father (Matt 5:13-16).

## The Righteous Can Stumble

As is characteristic of the rollercoaster life we live on earth, all days are not equal. There are times in our life the Bible describes as “the evil day” or “the day of trouble”.

Hezekiah had his day of trouble too. How did he react? He initially lacked the confidence and faith in God to face up to the challenge. But that’s not unique to him in the annals of the godly. The righteous can stumble but not permanently:

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighted in his way”.  
“Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand” (Ps 37:23-24; see also Prov. 24:16; Micah 7:8).

How did Hezekiah’s temporary fall come, and how did the Lord uphold him?

When King Hezekiah acceded to the throne, Judah was a subject state of Assyria, “the world’s first mega-empire” (*Who is Who and Where is Where in the Bible*, p. 38) and the dominant power in the Near East at that time. Hezekiah’s father, in return for the military backing of the Assyrian Empire, had offered to be a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser King of Assyria (2 Kings 16:7-9).

On assumption of office, King Hezekiah “rebelled against the King of Assyria and served him not”. He then “smote the Philistines,” who were likely loyal vassals of Assyria, “even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city” (2 Kings 18:7-8).

It took some years for the Assyrians to retaliate. Led by Sennacherib, their newly installed King, the Assyrians launched an attack on “all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Then Hezekiah King of Judah sent to the King of Assyria at Lachish, saying, I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay; And the King of Assyria assessed Hezekiah King of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the King’s house. At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple, and from the pillars which Hezekiah King of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the King of Assyria” ( 2 Kings 18:13-16 NKJV).

Look closely at how King Hezekiah reacted. Something is missing. God is out! When Sennacherib attacked Judah in retaliation for his earlier rebelling, Hezekiah turned to diplomacy, not the LORD! He seemed to have forgotten the Lord’s promise of deliverance in the time of trouble (Ps 50:15).

He sought salvation in diplomacy, putting his trust in the negotiation skills of his officials to appease the anger of Sennacherib and to fend off the his threatened invasion of Jerusalem. At this point in time, Hezekiah’s fear of Sennacherin seemed to have dwarfed his faith in God.

How often many of us make this mistake! At the first hint of trouble, we often turn to the familiar—we take a line of action that stems from human solutions. We look to friends, acquaintances and our own resources for help and victory. We tend to lean on our own understanding contrary to the advice given in Prov.3:5-6:

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart: and lean unto thine own understanding.  
“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths”.

The Lord is our refuge and strength and our very present help in trouble (Ps 46:1; Nah 1:7). Even when we are afraid, we must still trust in Him (Ps. 56:3), for by human strength shall no man prevail (1 Samuel 2:9). The Lord is the mighty One who delivers us from the enemy who is too strong for us (Ps 35:10; Jer 20:11).

Never trust in your own strength. “The Name of the LORD is a strong tower”; at the first whiff of trouble, **run** to Him and you will be “safe” (Prov. 18:10). Don’t rely on your own wisdom nor try to appease the enemy. It will not work for you, as King Hezekiah soon learnt.

His appeasement policy backfired! Sennacherib come back with more threats, demanding an even heavier tribute even though Hezekiah had emptied both the treasuries of the palace and temple to pay the earlier tribute. Obviously the Assyrians had interpreted Hezekiah’s submission as a sign of weakness.

As believers, we must resist the devil (Jam 4:7), strengthen ourselves in the Lord (Eph 6:10) and put on the whole armour of God (Eph 6:11, 13) not acquiesce, surrender or submit to the devil and his demons who are seemingly stronger than us (Eph 6:12)!

God is the One to whom we must submit and then resist the devil! (Jam 4:7).

### **Faith and Prayer, the Believer’s Weapon of Victory**

Hezekiah realized the futility of his efforts at dealing with the Assyrian threat when Sennacherib sent three of his top officials to demand more tribute and issue scornful threats:

“Then the King of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabaris, and the Rabshaketh from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem.

“When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which, was on the highway to the fuller’s field.

“And when they had called to the King, Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them.

“Then the Rabshakeh said to them, say now to Hezekiah, Thus says the great King, the King of Assyria what confidence is this in which you trust?

“You speak of having plans and power for war, but they are mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me?

“Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all who trust in him.

“But if you say to me, we trust in the LORD our God is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and said to Judah and Jerusalem, “You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

“Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the King of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses – if you are able on your part to put riders on them!

“How then will you repel one captain of the least of my master’s servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen?

“Have I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

“Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall;

“But the Rabshakeh said to them, “Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waster with you?

“Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, Hear the word of the great King the King of Assyria!

“Thus says the King: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand;

“Nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the King of Assyria!

“Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the King of Assyria: Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink from the waters of his own cistern;

“Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, and land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you saying, ‘The LORD will deliver us!

“Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the King of Assyria?

“Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand?

“Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand” (2 Kings 18:17-35 NKJV).

Sennacherib had made dear his intention to invade Jerusalem and visit his fury on the city if Hezekiah did not voluntarily surrender. While at it, he tried to incite the besieged and starving people of Jerusalem against their KING, instigating civil disobedience.

And he ridiculed the God of Israel comparing Him to the pagan gods of the nations Assyria had conquered. Sennacherib had dared the Almighty to battle! But it was not as though he was shooting his mouth off. Assyria was indeed a fearsome enemy! Hezekiah would later admit in his prayer to God. “Truly, LORD, the King of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands” (2 Kings 19:17 NKJV).

Ironically in Sennacherib’s words of impiety lay Hezekiah’s victory if only he could trust in Yahweh his God to fight the battle for him!

Job acknowledges: “God is wise in heart and might in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered? He removes the mountains, and they do not know when He overturns them in His anger. If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, ‘What are you doing? God will not withdraw His anger, the allies of the proud will lie prostrate beneath Him” (Job 9:4-5, 12-13 NKJV).

In the battles of our life, both spiritual and physical, we should trust in God to fight for us, for the battle is the LORD’s (1 Samuel 17:47; 2 Chron. 20:15). “God hath spoken once, the Psalmist says, “twice have I heard this: that power belongeth unto God” (Ps. 62:11) The LORD rules by His power forever (Ps 66:7)! His promise is sure: I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not

far what man shall do unto me” (Heb.13:5-6). He always causes us to triumph in Christ (2 Cor 2:14)!

So would Hezekiah believe?

There is one secret believers need to know. When God allows the wicked to ride roughshod over the righteous it is for the revelation of His greater glory. We read in Ps 66:12: “Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place”.

The LORD instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh:

“But indeed for this purpose [of showing My greater glory] I have raised you up [as emperor-oppressor] that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth” (Ex 9:16 NKJV).

As Prov. 16:4 says, all the things the Lord has allowed are for the fulfillment of His own purposes. “The LORD hath made all things for Himself yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” [or “doom” NKJV].

Such is indeed the story of the rise of Assyria to regional dominance in the ancient Near East. It was the Lord Himself who raised Assyria for His own purposes:

“O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. “I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take a spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isa. 10:5-6; cf Jer. 25:11-12).

God states His direct hand in the rise of Assyria, but, as is usually the case, the Assyrian takes no knowledge of it, ascribing power to himself:

“Wherefore if shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem.

“I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

“For he saith, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures; and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.

“And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped” (vv. 12 - 14).

But the prophet asks in wonder: “Shall the ax [Assyria] boast itself against him [God] that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood” (v 15).

When the Lord does not stop the enemy from troubling or hindering us for a while, he tends to think that he has overcome us for good. Scarcely does he know that “our light affliction [from him], which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17 see Rom. 8:28) indeed, “many are the afflictions

of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of the all” (Ps 34:19). As he faced his second trial in the imperial court of Nero, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

“At my first answer (defense) man stood with me, but all man forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.’ And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim. 4:16-18).

The deliverance transcends this life-the lord will preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom (1 Pet 1:5). He will be our guide even unto death’ (Ps 48:14) and ultimately give us victory over it.

The Lord has made all things for Himself, including the wicked for the day of destruction (Read 1 Cor.3:21-22). Eccl 8:11 states ‘because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”.

Thus the Lord prophesied concerning Assyria, the evil oppressor:

“ ... O My people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyria he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

“For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and Mine anger in their destruction.

“And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Orebiand as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and **THE YOKE SHALL BE DESTROYED BECAUSE OF THE ANOINTING**” (Isa. 10: 24-27).

Here, the Lord God on whose say-so Assyria rose to power has predicted its fall: The yoke of Assyria on the neck of His people shall be destroyed because of the anointing!

The anointing broke forth when Hezekiah, the righteous King of Judah, relied not on diplomacy but on the LORD of hosts during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem.

When his officials Eliakim, Shebna and Joah reported the threats of Sennacherib to him (2 King 18:37), this was how Hezekiah reacted:

“And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

“Then he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.

“And they said to him, Thus says Hezekiah: This day is a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth;

“If may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the King of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard.

“Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left” (2 Kings 19:1-4).

This was the reply of Isaiah, the prophet:

“... Thus you shall say to your master, Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed Me” (v 6).

Note the wonderful, reassuring statement from the LORD! In answer to Hezekiah’s plea to the LORD to hear the threatening and blasphemous words of the Rabshakeh uttered on behalf of Sennacherib, He says “Do not be afraid of the words ..... with which the servants of the Kings of Assyria have blasphemed Me!” The LORD makes the battle His own! The battle is no longer Hezekiah’s!

This is the believer’s sure path to victory in every war. Make the battle the LORD’s and the battle is already won! As David engaged the Philistine giant Goliath in battle, he said to him:

“You come to me with a sword, with spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.  
“This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take you head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.  
“Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle in the LORD’s and He will give you into our hands” (1 Samuel 17: 45-47 NKJV).

Yes, the LORD does not save by means of the ordinary weapons of war with which people without God wage war; He saves by the greatness of His infinite power!

So the Lord continues His answer to Hezekiah, unveiling the first part of His strategy of victory over Sennacherib: “Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land” (2 Kings 19: 7).

In the meantime, King Hezekiah didn’t neglect to make whatever physical preparations he needed to make for the threatened war. But ultimately his faith was in the Lord and Him alone:

“And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem,  
“He consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs [Gihon] which were outside the city [diverting it by tunnel into the west side of the city v. 30], and they helped him.  
“This many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, ‘Why should the Kings of Assyria come and find much water?’  
“And he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised it up to the towers, and build another wall outside, also he repaired the Millo in the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance.  
“Then he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying.  
“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the King of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him, for there are more with us than with him.

**“With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles: And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah King of Judah” (2 Chron. 32: 2- 8; compare 2 Chron. 14: 9-11).**

So how did the Lord send a spirit of alarm on Sennacherib as He promised in 2 Kings 19:7?

The King of Ethiopia came out against Sennacherib, whereupon he departed from the Judean city of Lachish to engage him at Libnah. But not before Sennacherib sent a message to Hezekiah of his intent to take Jerusalem (vv. 8-9):

**“This you shall speak to Hezekiah King of Judah, saying: Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the King of Assyria. “Look! You have heard what the Kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered? (vv. 10-11).**

Again Sennacherib blasphemed the God of Israel putting Him on a par with the powerless, false gods of the pagan nations the Kings of Assyria had destroyed (vv. 12 – 13).

The proud King of Assyria had taken God’s mild warning to back off for a joke! He had hardened his “stout heart” against the Almighty God of Israel. This is a pattern to watch: The enemy often takes lightly the LORD’s initial warnings only to incur His greater wrath! The Pharaoh of Moses’ day was a perfect example.

Humanly speaking, however, it was sheer foolhardy for Hezekiah to resist the might of the Assyria Empire. Not only was he no match for Sennacherib and his army, but also, once defeated, Hezekiah would most likely suffer gruesome torture at the hands of his Assyrian captors. History reports that the Assyrians were exceptionally cruel to vassal rulers like Hezekiah who rebelled against them.

In the book *Who’s Who and Where’s Where in the Bible*, we read an article headlined “The Evil Empire”:

**“How to treat a prisoner of war Assyria style: Stake them to the ground. Sew wild, live cats inside their abdomen Watch the cats claw their way back out. Assyrians did this at least once to the survivors of a city that resisted their invasion. The intent was to terrify future enemies.**

**“Battlefield terrorism like this also earned Assyria its reputation as the most evil and brutal empire in the ancient world. It’s a reputation they acclaimed. Artwork on Nineveh’s palace walls showcased graphic scenes. One famous scene chiseled into stone is of dead Jews from Lachish, a city about thirty miles from Jerusalem, pierced through their chest with stakes as thick as a fencepost. Crucified with this single pierce, they hang in rows outside the city walls” (Stephen M. Miller, *Who’s Who and Where’s Where in the Bible*, p., 39).**

*Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs* corroborates the account of Assyria’s sadistic treatment of rebels with more details:

**“They [the Assyrians] vented their full fury against the rebellious .... With punishments so severe that they would not dare to rebel again—and that others who entertained thoughts of rebellion would immediately dismiss them from their minds. Those who dared to rebel might have their hands chopped off or be skinned alive and have their skins publicly displayed on a**



pole. The Assyrians often used their [punitive] actions as propaganda or psychological warfare” (Howard F. Vos, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs*, pp., 260- 261).

The prospect of being impaled or skinned alive for his protracted rebellion alone could have terrified Hezekiah to surrender. But no. This time his faith in God was unshakeable– so strong that he took the letter containing Sennacherib’s threat to invade Jerusalem to the temple for God to read for Himself:

“And Hezekiah received the letter for the hand of the messengers, and read it, and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD” (2 Kings 19: 14 NKJV).

The beleaguered King then launched into a prayer to God:

“Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the Kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

“Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear, open your eyes, O LORD, and see, and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.

“Truly, LORD the Kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands – wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them.

“Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray save us from his hand, that all the Kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the LORD God, you alone” (2 Kings 19: 15-19).

Let’s take some time to analyze Hezekiah’s prayer, paying particular attention to the format. Hezekiah mentions what most important first. He first acknowledges God for who He is – the only true Supreme Being, the unequalled Mighty One, and he ascribes all power to Him. He alone rules the Kingdoms of the earth by His power forever, and He’s without equal among the so-called gods, for He is the creator, the Maker of heaven and earth. A long the line, Hezekiah makes an indirect appeal for God’s mercy by referring to His dwelling place on the mercy seat between the two cherubim (see Ex. 25:20-23; Ps 80:1-3).

Hezekiah then presents the problem to the Lord; again he makes the issue the Lord’s:

“Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear, open your eyes O LORD, and see, and heart the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God”.

Next, he admits the gravity of the situation, but then his reliance on the true God makes all the difference for him as a believer, unlike the unbelievers without the living God:

“Truly, LORD the Kings of Assyria have laid waster the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands – wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them”.

Having built up his prayer thus far, Hezekiah now presents his petition to God: “Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand that all the Kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the LORD God, you alone”.

This is a prayer that moves heaven, stirring the Almighty, sitting in His heavenly council, into action (see Ps 89: 5-13, 18:6-10). Promptly, the Lord sent a message of answered prayer to Hezekiah through Isaiah, the prophet:

“Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib King of Assyria, I have heard!

“This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn: the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back” (2 Kings 19:20-21 NKJV).

In response to Hezekiah’s prayer, God says He will give the weak, despised but righteous (i.e. virgin) daughter of Zion victory over the strong and haughty Sennacherib, and she will poke fun at him.

He continues:

“Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?

“Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel” (v. 22).

Here, the Lord personally acknowledges for the second time that the battle is His. By his war of words Sennacherib has declared war on the Living God, the Holy One of Israel!

Next, the Lord recounts Sennacherib’s boasts of his military operations and conquests, wryly mimicking the Assyrian propensity for exaggeration:

“By your messengers you have reproached the Lord, and said: By the multitude of my chariots have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypress [fir] trees; I will enter the extremity of its borders, to its fruitful forest.

“I have dug and drunk strange water [the Nile] and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense” (vv. 23-24).

The Assyrians were masters of war and won many victories on the battlefield, but they were also masters of hyperbole. Professor Howard F. Vos confirms this in his book *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs*, page 264:

“As the Assyrians fought, they inflicted heavy casualties and often made claims of rather astronomical proportions. They also recorded large quantities of booty and large numbers of prisoners taken and carried off into captivity.

“An example of Assyrian exaggeration, confirming the truth and accuracy of the Biblical story of King Hezekiah, is preserved in the royal records of Sennacherib – a six-sided clay prism – currently housed in the British Museum:

“As to Hezekiah the Jew”, Sennacherib brags, “he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity and conquered (them) by means of well stamped (earth) ramps, and battering rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot soldiers, (using) mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old male and female, horses mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them)

booty. [Hezekiah] Himself I made prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him ...” (ibid., p., 260).

For all the boasts of the Assyrians, the Lord assures Hezekiah that He, as the only true God, is in control. The Assyrians are not the authors of their own success; they exist at His pleasure (see Ez. 31: 2-9; Isa. 10:5-8, 24-26):

“Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it? Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins. “Therefore their inhabitants had little power; they were dismayed and confound, they were as the grass of the field and the green herb, as the grass on the housetops and grain blighted before it is grown” (vv. 25-26).

The nations Assyria conquered “ had little power” for the Lord made them so, so that His word concerning Assyria as His instrument of punishment might be fulfilled. But not Hezekiah and his people. They will prevail because their enemy, the dreaded Assyrians, are under the thumb of the mighty God of Israel who fights the battle:

“But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against Me. “Because your rage against Me and your tumult have come up to my ears, therefore I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way you come” (vv. 27-28; cf. Isa. 54:16-17).

Sennacherib’s defeat is decreed and the Lord pays him in his own coin: “I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way you came”.

From pictorial representations on Assyrian monuments, we know that the Assyrians often led away their captives by ropes attached to rings put in their noses (see 2 Chron. 33:11). And now because the Lord has answered Hezekiah’s prayer, Sennacherib is the Lord’s captive! He will literally lead him by the back to his country and there fall by the sword.

In the New Testament spiritual warfare, we should pray for the Lord to bring into captivity” the evil thoughts and plans of the enemy (2 Cor 10:3-5). In the event, only “the counsel of the LORD shall stand” (Prov. 19:21, Ps. 33:10-11), and the enemy will surely learn that “There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD [who fights the battle]” (Prov. 21:30).

Then the Lord gives a sign of His total deliverance of Hezekiah and his people:

“This shall be a sign to you:  
“You shall eat this year such as grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from the same, also in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.  
“And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall take root downward, and bear fruit upward.  
“For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this” (vv. 29-31).

The Lord counters Sennacherib's boast to the starving people of Jerusalem under siege that if they make peace with him by payment of tribute they will eat and drink to their fill and not die (2 Kings 18:31-32). Sennacherib gives his word, his false hope, at a time Jerusalem is most vulnerable – besieged and starving – and therefore most likely to capitulate out of the force of circumstances, or at least riot against their King Hezekiah. The temptation to capitulate is high, but the people keep faith with their God and King (2 Kings 18:36).

The enemy tends to strike when we are most vulnerable, but we must remain alert at all times, ever cognizant of his devices (1 Peter 5: 8; 2 Cor. 2: 11).

The Adversary (Satan) struck a blow of temptation at Job at a time of arguably his greatest vulnerability, when he (Satan) entered Job's wife and spoke through her: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die" (Job 2:9).

Here was Job's reply: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (v. 10).

Resisting temptation is not easy. But Jesus shows us the way in His victory over the devil in the wilderness temptation.

To the temptation to turn stones into bread at a time he felt hunger from His fasting, Christ answered the devil: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:1-4). And Jesus did overcome every temptation of Satan by the living Word of God: "It's written, it's written again, for it is written".

That's the way to withstand temptation: Total reliance on God's word in the face of Satan's temptations and nays.

So the Lord assures Jerusalem in His answer to Hezekiah's prayer: Don't give in to Sennacherib because of your present dire conditions; I am more than able to save and provide for you! You shall not starve to death as Sennacherib says. This year you shall eat what grows of itself – creating out of it enough abundance to satisfy everyone. In the second year you shall eat what springs from the leftovers of the first year.

In the third year you shall sow and reap, because the siege will have long gone with peace prevailing. Although Sennacherib says he will uproot you from your land to a foreign land, I say you shall "take root downward and bear fruit upward".

David Sung:

"I waited patiently for the LORD, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

"And He hath put a new song in my mouth even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD" (Ps. 40:1-3).

In righteousness shall we be established (Isa. 54:14) Halleluiah!

In verses 32-34 of 2 Kings 19, God continues His assurance of salvation to Jerusalem:

“Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the King of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it:

“By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come into this city, says the LORD.

“For I will defend this city, to save it for my own sake and for my servant David’s sake”.

For His own sake, we shall not be put to shame (Rom. 10:11):

“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.

“Wherefore should the heathen say, where is not their God” (Ps 115:1-2; see also Ps 79:9-10).

But since the inheritance of the righteous shall endure forever (Ps 37:18), the Lord also saves Jerusalem, the royal city of David, for “My servant David’s sake” Prov. 12:7 says, “The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand” (also 14:11).

### **The Lord Does not Save with Sword and Spear**

God, “a man of war” (Ex. 15:3), does not fight His battles the conventional way. An element of the miraculous, of the supernatural, is always part of His strategy of war and victory. This is something Sennacherib shortly learns:

“And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty – five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses all dead.

“So Sennacherib King of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.

“Now it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adramelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat.

“Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place” (2 Kings 19: 35-37).

The Lord does not fight for us using conventional weapons – sword and spear – with which the enemy fights us. Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem with his 185,000 strong army, which was quite a formidable force for the time, thinking Hezekiah would come out against him with his ‘ragtag’, starving, underdog army! But the LORD of hosts completely outfoxed, thwarted and humiliated him. May all the enemies of God suffer likewise (1 Sam. 2: 10).

With the humiliating defeat of Sennacherib, the LORD exalted Hezekiah above his enemies, the Assyrians, and all others (Ps. 27:6). The defeat of Assyria, the Near Eastern superpower of the time, caused a geopolitical stir:

“Thus the LORD save Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the King of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side.

“And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah King of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter” (2 Chron. 32: 22-23 NKJV).

When the Lord brings down our enemies, He exalts us at the same time (1 Sam. 2: 1-10; Judges 5:31). Praise His Holy Name forever!

### **The LORD is near to those who call upon Him in Truth**

Not long after the Lord miraculously gave Hezekiah victory over Assyria, the King fell sick, sick unto death. Or so the Lord said, but He swiftly had to reverse it—all in the same Divine breath! How could that happen? Let’s read the amazing story:

“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.

“Then he turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying.

“Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal [KJV perfect] heart, and have done what was good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly. “And it happened, before Isaiah has gone out [of the King’s chamber] into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him saying.

“Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of my people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD!

“And I will add to your days fifteen years .....” (2 Kings 20: 1-6 NKJV).

How swift the LORD’s answer!

Before Isaiah, who had just delivered a message of woe to the King in his chamber, had passed the middle court of the palace, the Lord had heard Hezekiah’s prayer, seen his tears and promised healing! It turned out that Hezekiah sickness was not unto death after all, but for the manifestation of God’s glory as Jesus said of Lazarus sickness (John 11:4).

Hezekiah’s prayer reveals two keys to receiving instant answers to prayer. The first key is in Ps 145: 18-19: “The LORD is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them”.

That is to say, the LORD swiftly answers the prayer of those who call upon Him with godly integrity (because He is close to them). He’s quick to hear their cry and quick to save them!

The second key has to do with God’s “book of remembrance” in heaven in which are recorded the righteous acts and services of the godly: “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name” (Mal. 3:16).

The “book of remembrance” comes into its own in the day of trouble, when the righteous particularly needs to be remembered and saved by the LORD:

“And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serve him. “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and His that serveth Him not” (vv. 17-18).

Keeping a scroll of remembrance in the palace of the King was a standard practice in the ancient Near East. In the book of Esther, Mordecai averted a chilling rendezvous with Haman’s gallows thanks to the scroll of remembrance (the royal chronicle) in the Persian palace at Susa (Esther 2: 21-23, 6).

Faithfulness and God’s remembrance of the righteous – again notice how Hezekiah puts the two together to ‘leverage’ his prayer: “ I beseech Thee, O LORD remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” (2 Kings 20:3).

In simple terms, Hezekiah prayed, ‘I have been faithful to you, LORD. Remember me for that, and keep faith with your servant in my hour of trouble!’ Hezekiah pulled at the heartstrings of God, concealing not his tears of pain nor his helplessness nor desperation from Him. He poured out his heart to the LORD; he wept bitterly’ before Him (see 1 Samuel 1: 15 – 16; Lam 2:19).

The loving Father, full of tender mercy could not hesitate a second. He responded immediately!

Psalm 18 shows the Davidic origins of the prayer Hezekiah prayed during his sickness. David praised the Lord thus “on the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul”:

“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

“For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

“For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me.

“I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

“Therefore hath the LORD recompenses me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight” (vv. 20-24).

In the above Psalm, David didn’t mean he had no sin. In fact, elsewhere, he acknowledges his sin to the Lord (Ps. 32:5) and pleads with Him not to hold the sins of his youth against him (Ps 25:7) but to blot out his transgressions (Ps 51:1,9).

Yet David did not “wickedly depart” from his God as the ungodly do with relish! He kept himself from his iniquities and lived an upright life before God.

According to *Vine’ Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, a second meaning of the Hebrew word for wicked “*rasa*” denotes the category of “people who have done wrong, are still living in sin, and are intent on continuing with wrong doing” (1996 ed., p. 287).

Contrast this with the desire of the righteous to do God’s will:

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

"I have not hid thy righteousness within my hearts; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

"Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me" (Ps 40: 8-11).

Despite his flaws, David's heart was perfect toward God – a man after God's own heart (Ps. 101: 2; Acts 13: 22; 1 Samuel 13:14) and he hid His word in his heart (Ps 119:11).

Hezekiah had such a perfect heart. "And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done" (2 Kings 18: 3 *NKJV*). The perfect heart provokes deliverances from heaven in the day of trouble! The disobedient soul, however, cuts himself off from all Divine mercy (Prov. 1:23-28)!

Hezekiah was about 38 years old when he fell sick near to death. The sickness threatened to cut him off in the prime of youth, but his prayer did the unthinkable! In spite of God's somber declaration that he would die and not live, Hezekiah prayed and 'wept sore' before the LORD and was, by his prayer of faith, able to do what no man has power to do: "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit neither hath he power in the day of death" (Eccl. 8:8).

Although Hezekiah was powerless in the face of death, he knew and trusted One who had power over death, indeed power to retain the spirit of man in the day of death.

He is Yahweh, the Author of life and the Giver of the spirit of man (Gen. 2:7, Job 12:10, 33:4). He is the One who "holdeth our soul in life" (Ps 66:9).

With his knowledge of this truth, Elijah, the prophet, pleaded with the LORD, pleaded with the LORD thus, when the son of the widow who preserved him from famine died: "O LORD my God I pray, let this child's soul come back to him; Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:21-22 *NKJV*).

This was again the foundational 'secret' Jesus employed in raising Jairus' daughter and Lazarus back to life (Luke 8: 41, 49-55; John 11). When He cried out "Lazarus, come forth," it was a command to the soul of Lazarus to come back to him. And lo, "he that was dead came forth [when his departed spirit returned to him] bound hand and foot with graveclothes and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, LOOSE HIM, AND LET HIM GO" (John 11:43-44).

What is impossible with men it is possible with God (Matt 19:26). Hezekiah prevailed in the day of death because he asked God to intervene in a situation he was completely powerless. Isaiah sings the praises of the Lord, the strength of our life (Ps 27:1). "He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isa 40:29).

But could it have been that if Hezekiah had not prayed, he would have died before his time? If so, how do we reconcile this with Ps 37:18 "The LORD knoweth the days of the upright"?



Since God's thoughts towards us are ultimately for our good, the prayers we offer for good health, riches and long life among others align with His plans ordained beforehand for us (Jer 29:11; Heb 4:3, Rom 9:23). Even so, we should still ask: "Thus says LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things [plans, purposes, etc] to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hand, YOU COMMAND ME" (Isa. 45:11 *NKJV* Emphasis mine)!

The Creator God exercises sovereign power over all things, each in the time and order. He has predetermined. Yes, He has already ordained, but we must pray and command Him for it to be fulfilled! His ways are: "past finding out" indeed:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33).

So whatever the case, it is the sovereign God Who plans, hears and performs! "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD HIS God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth forever" (Ps 146:5-6).

He kept truth with Hezekiah in his day of sickness and death—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). He added fifteen years to his life: "Then Isaiah said, take a lump of figs! So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered" (2 Kings 20:7 *NKJV*).

Here's an important lesson to learn. We must obey whatever instructions the Lord gives us in answer to our prayers. To do so is to demonstrate faith in Him, as faith without action is dead (Jam. 2: 17).

In several instances, Jesus put the faith of sick folks to the test: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" to the paralytic (John 5:8); "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam", to the man born blind (John 9:7).

Finally don't neglect to ask for a sign of answered prayer:

"And Hezekiah said to Isaiah; What is the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?

"Then Isaiah said, This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?

"And Hezekiah answered, it is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees!

"So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz" (2 Kings 20:8-11 *NKJV*).

### **Guard against Pride, Glory in the Lord Only**

Wealth tends to beget pride (Ez. 28: 5; Job 31:24-25), and pride goes before a fall (Prov. 16:18).

When the Lord blesses us we must not esteem the riches above honour to God and humility before Him. This was the trap Hezekiah fell into. But as one who possessed a 'perfect heart' he quickly came to himself and repented.

This was what happened:

**"At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, King of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.**

**"And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed that all the house of his treasures the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory – all that was found among his treasuries. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.**

**"Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, What did these men say, and from where did they come to you? So Hezekiah said, They came from a far country, from Babylon!**

**"And he said, 'What have they seen in your house? So Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them!**

**"Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD:**

**"Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your father have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left; says the LORD.**

**"And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon!**

**"So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good! "For he said, will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" (2 Kings 20:12-19 NKJV).**

In 2 Chronicle's account, the writer adds important piece of information left out in 2 Kings:

**"In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign.**

**"But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown [as commanded in Ps 50:15; see also Ps 116], for his heart was lifted up, therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem.**

**"Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.**

**"Hezekiah had very great riches and honour. And he made himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields and for all kinds of desirable items.**

**"However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the [divine] wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron 32:24-27, 31 NKJV; see Ps 11: 4- 5).**

In Deut.8, God warned Israel through Moses:

**"When thou hast eaten and art full then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.**

**"Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day:**

**"Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly house, and dwelt therein;**

“And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold in multiply, and all that thou hast in multiply;

“Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

“Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water, who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

“Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at they latter end;

“And thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (vv. 10-18).

To stay innocent as well as stay in the blessing of the Lord, everything we do must glorify God: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Cor. 10:31).

We are not to glory in ourselves or in other men, for all things are ours through Christ (1 Cor.3:21-23). We should glory in the Lord only, who gives us the power to get wealth and from whom every good and perfect gift comes (1 Cor. 1:30; Jam. 1:17; 1 Chron. 29:14).

### **“O that Ishmael might live before Thee!”**

With the divine good will he enjoyed, Hezekiah erred, in fact was irresponsible, in not calling on the LORD to cancel the evil decreed against his descendants for the sin of “the pride of his heart”. He even sounded rather selfish: “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good” the King said in response to the message from Isaiah. “For he said, At least there will be peace and truth in my days” (Isaiah 39:8 *NKJV*).

To the extent that “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children” (Ps 103:17), Hezekiah stood a good chance with God to plead for his descendants.

The Psalmist entrusts his offspring to the LORD in Ps 102:28: “The children of thy servants shall continue and their seed shall be established before thee”.

When God reiterated His promise of a son to Abraham by Sarah at a time Ishmael was a young lad of 13 years, Abraham, worried that God would by this remove His favour from Ishmael, implored the LORD: “O that Ishmael might live before thee” (Gen 17:18).

To this request the LORD replied: “And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year” (vv. 20-21).

Unlike Abraham, Hezekiah miserably failed to secure divine favour for his immediate descendants which he would have easily obtained had he asked. Was it partly the reason why his son and immediate successor to the throne, Manasseh, proved to be exceptionally evil among all the Kings of Judah?

Stephen Miller opens his description of King Manasseh in his book *Who's Who and Where's Where in the Bible* this way: "At the bottom of the barrel of Jewish Kings rots the smelliest apple of all – Manasseh, son of saintly King Hezekiah" (p. 247; see 2 Kings 21:1-7, 9-12, 16).

Nevertheless, Hezekiah maintained his integrity till his death:

"Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

"So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place" (2 Chron. 32: 32-33 NKJV).

### **Summary of Lessons Learned**

- Hezekiah was faithful in obedience; he put God first, and the Lord blessed him in return. He had a "perfect heart" like King David "his father". As a direct consequence of his obedience, Hezekiah prospered wherever he went in all his works (2 Kings 18:7; 2 Chron. 32:30).
- King Hezekiah set a personal example of obedience to his people. He lived what he preached! The apostle Paul says in 1 Cor 9: 27: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (NKJV).
- Hezekiah honoured the Lord with his substance in recognition of God's role in his success. He did not "rob God" of the porting of his income due Him, he treated the holy as holy!
- Hezekiah was a man of faith and prayer. Whenever a problem would swallow him up, he would be wrapped up in prayer! And he knew how to move Heaven by his prayer. He chose his words carefully, each contributing to building a solid case for God's help and intervention. He strengthened himself in the Lord as against the threats of mortal men. Note especially his prayer of humility and mourning that overturned God's decree of death' against him. The Lord healed him of his sickness and added fifteen years to his life!
- Hezekiah momentarily 'forgot' to give the Lord all the glory in the days following his miraculous healing when royals from Babylon came to inquire after the Divine wonder performed in the land and on his person. Instead, he chose to show off his wealth – when in the vanity of the pride of his heart God left him. So glory in the Lord only, for God resists the proud (Jam. 4:6).

- King Hezekiah was remiss in praying for the well-being of his descendants, even though he had been told of the danger ahead of them. When the Lord informed him that he would die of his sickness, Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly before him. Not so, however, when the Lord decreed punishment against his descendants because of his pride and mistake, not because of their sins – at least as of the time of the divine pronouncement. We must pray for our children, as David prayed for Solomon to have “a perfect heart” (1 Chron. 29:19) so that unbelievers would acknowledge them as “the seed which the LORD hath blessed” (Isaiah 61:9).

In conclusion, Hezekiah epitomizes the life of faithfulness and piety pleasing to God. Despite his flaws and mistakes (which every person has), he was sincere in his walk with God. To this day, God demands that we love Him with all our heart (Mark 12: 30).

With the purest of conscience, may we all be able to say together with Hezekiah: “LORD ... I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart” (Isaiah 38:3).

This is the Kind of life that witnesses ‘the might of Yahweh’ at work in our lives to save, to heal and to bless. Our subject and hero of the faith, Hezekiah, literally lived his name. HEZEKIYAH means “the might of Yahweh”. His life is a vindication of 2 Chron. 16:9: “The eyes of the LORD run to and for throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him”.

May all of us have a perfect heart toward Him. So help us Lord! Amen!

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