

## **WHEN YOU NEED A MIRACLE**

Hezekiah— 2 Kings 19

### **INTRODUCTION**

I love reading stories of miracles God performed. The Bible is filled with them. Jesus performed many miracles. According to one source, Jesus is recorded performing 37 miracles. But this is not all because John ends his account of Jesus by saying:

*Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. John 21:25 <sup>ESV</sup>*

John is saying that the 37 recorded miracles are just a drop in the bucket of the total number he performed.

And in the early church, Peter and the other disciples continued to perform miracles.

God is still in the business of performing miracles. Maybe not the same number that Jesus did, or were in the early church. But nowhere in the Bible does it say that God has stopped performing miracles until Jesus comes back.

I think most of us believe that God still performs miracles—at least we believe it theoretically. But it is true. We can read of miracles God does in our present-day world.

What is a miracle? Here's a couple of definitions:

*An extraordinary and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore attributed to a divine agency. Oxford Dictionary*

*An extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs. Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

*My Def: God intervening into life to make something happen.*

God can intervene in a big way, or a small way. The implication is that if God did not intervene into the situation, nothing would happen. I want us to realize that while God still performs big miracles, like healing a person, or causing a person to give a large sum of money at the last moment to pay for some work of God, God is working in many more, smaller ways.

E.g. he may turn the heart of an employer to hire you; he may turn the heart of a university admissions committee member to offer you entrance.

Every time God answers a prayer, that is a miracle. It is a miracle because God intervened into the situation. It may not be a big miracle, but it is still a miracle. If God didn't answer the prayer or intervene, it would not have happened.

I like this understanding miracles because it helps us realize that God is still performing miracles today—in both big and small ways.

As we continue in our series on Prayers of the O.T., I want to look at King Hezekiah. Hezekiah needed a miracle. And God did perform a miracle—a big one. As we look at Hezekiah, we can see how to pray for a miracle—big or small.

Let me say up front, that this is not a formula that guarantees a miracle. And God does not always respond to our requests. God is sovereign over all things, and not obligated to us. When he responds to us, it is always out of his love and grace to us.

### **Setting**

Hezekiah ruled from 715-687 B.C. He became king when he was 25 years old. Of all the kings after David, Hezekiah was the most godly.

*He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. ... <sup>5</sup> Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. <sup>6</sup> He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD was with him. 2 Kings 18:3,5-7 <sup>NIV</sup>*

Hezekiah had become king and started a series of religious reforms to bring the nation back to worshipping God. Part of these reforms had to do with rebelling against the rule of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, under whom the nation of Judah was subject.

That, of course, did not make Sennacherib happy.

*In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. <sup>14</sup> So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 2 Kings 18:13-14*

So Sennacherib sent his army against Judah and systematically destroyed city after city until he came to Jerusalem. Faced with certain destruction, Hezekiah initially had a lapse of trust in God. That initially placated Sennacherib, but later, Sennacherib either wanted more money or wanted to depose Hezekiah and put his own man on the throne. He, again, came against Jerusalem and commanded Hezekiah to surrender, but this time, Hezekiah decided to trust God and not give in. "The issue that awaits an appropriate answer is whether or not Hezekiah can serve the Lord, disobey Assyria, and survive." NAC And if he did, he needed a miracle from God.

What are some lessons we can learn from Hezekiah?

### 1. Recognize that God wants to hear you

Initially, Hezekiah sent some officials to the prophet, Isaiah, so that Isaiah could seek the LORD and get a message for Hezekiah. But after the second time that the Assyrian commander demanded Hezekiah's surrender, Hezekiah went to the LORD himself.

*Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD. 2 Kings 19:14 <sup>NIV</sup>*

The insight I want to draw from this is that every child of God can go to our Heavenly Father to pray to him. This is what the Bible refers to as the priesthood of all believers.

Peter reminds the Christians of this special relationship:

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood... 1 Peter 2:9 <sup>NIV</sup>*

Each of you, if you are a child of God, is also a priest. You don't need a pastor or priest to pray on your behalf. You can come to God on your own. You are a priest. That doesn't mean you shouldn't get others to pray for you, including a pastor or elder. But God is going to hear your prayers just the same as he hears a pastor's prayer.

A second lesson on prayer is:

### 2. Come with a deep sense of dependence upon God

When the Assyrian commander demanded Hezekiah's surrender, it says:

*When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. 2 Kings 19:1 <sup>NIV</sup>*

Sackcloth was like wearing a gunny sack. Putting on sackcloth was an act of extreme humility and mourning. Hezekiah knew he could do nothing to change the situation. It was hopeless. The only way things were going to change was if God would do something. He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth as an expression of his total inability to do anything.

This points up, how desperate are we? Usually, when a person put on sackcloth, they also fasted and prayed. Today, we don't fast much, if at all. But fasting is always a sign of spiritual humility and desperation. It shows how much we want what we are praying for. And it shows how helpless we are.

A third lesson of praying for a miracle is:

### 3. Begin your prayer focusing on the greatness of God

Prayer should always focus first on God before we pray about our need. Notice how Hezekiah began his prayer:

*And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 2 Kings 19:15 <sup>NIV</sup>*

He addresses God, enthroned between the cherubim. This refers to the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies in the temple, where God made his presence known to the Israelites. It was a reminder that God is with them. God doesn't just sit somewhere off in the universe someplace. He is with us.

Hezekiah acknowledged that not only was God the God over all the kingdoms of the earth, he also made heaven and earth. This refers to the sovereignty and power of God. There is nothing God cannot do. This is why a miracle is always a possibility with God. Even over a powerful, ungodly nation, like Assyria.

It's important to begin your pray with praising God for who he is. When you do this, you realize that God is infinitely greater and more powerful than any person or situation on earth. It not only reminds us of the greatness and majesty of God; it puts every situation in perspective. Nothing we face is impossible with God.

And then, when we pray, we:

### 4. Appeal to the honor and glory of God

Hezekiah heard the words of the field commander and, above all, they were words of ridicule of God. *"Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' <sup>33</sup> Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? <sup>34</sup> Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? <sup>35</sup> Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" 2 Kings 18:32-35 <sup>NIV</sup>*

The field commander declared that the LORD is simply one of many powerless gods and could not deliver Jerusalem. The Lord God was just like all the other gods of the nations who were defeated by the Assyrians. The Lord God was weak and ineffective compared to the gods of Assyria. In saying these things, he was attacking the glory and honor of God.

The first time Hezekiah sent his officials to Isaiah the prophet, he told them to say to Isaiah:

*It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard." 2 Kings 19:4*

Hezekiah was a godly man and was jealous for the glory and honor of God. "For this reason desperation is laden with hope, for Yahweh does not stand passively on the side when someone mocks his name and character." (Davis) Hezekiah had a deep concern for the reputation of God. The field commander reduced God's majesty to the level of other gods. The Lord God was just another limited god.

God is not being egotistical when he says:

*Exodus 34:14 Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

God is a jealous God. He is jealous for his glory and honor because he, alone, is the only God. There is no other god who is glorious or majestic. He is jealous for his glory because he alone is glorious. It is perfectly right for God to be jealous for his reputation and honor.

One result of praying for a miracle is that when God performs a miracle, there is no one but him who gets the credit. A miracle shows the glory of God in such a way that God gets all the credit.

This concern for God's glory is one of the qualifiers that Jesus gave to us when we pray: Jesus said to his disciples and to us:

*John 14:12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.<sup>13</sup> And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

Whatever we pray, we should pray in such a way that God gets the honor and glory.

## 5. Pray for the Need and the Effect

When Hezekiah prays, it a simple prayer. The first part is:

*Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, ... 2 Kings 19:19<sup>NIV</sup>*

Obviously, the request wasn't complicated. Help! He prayed for deliverance.

And look at the second part of the prayer:

*Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, LORD, are God." 2 Kings 19:19<sup>NIV</sup>*

Hezekiah wanted a miracle so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that there is only one God, and the Lord God is He.

This is the nature of a miracle. Skeptics may try to explain the miracle in natural ways to discredit God. And it may be that God works through natural means to bring the miracle. But the timing of it and the completeness of it point to God. The miracle can really only be explained by the simple fact that God did it.

And this is what God did for Hezekiah.

*That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! 2 Kings 19:35<sup>NIV</sup>*

The unmistakable result was that God performed a miracle.

Now again, this is not a magical formula for God to perform a miracle. God is not going to answer every prayer. He is not going to perform a miracle every time we pray. We know that. But never let us limit God or think we know the mind of God, and as a result, we don't bother to pray for a miracle.

## Next Steps: