



God Hears

God listens to the honest and humble prayers of His followers.

2 KINGS 19:10-19,32-34

Prayer is an invitation into the throne room of God. This invitation is about having a conversation with the Creator of the universe and being ushered into His presence as someone He desires to spend time with. God wants to hear from us and to show us His wisdom and plans. Like any other invitation, we must choose to accept it. Too many times, we expect God to act but do so without approaching Him.

Why might people ignore God even when facing a crisis? What amazes you most about God's desire to hear our prayers?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

2 KINGS 18:1–21:26 (2 CHRON. 29:1–33:25)

King Hezekiah became king of Judah and acted to turn the nation back to God (2 Kings 18:1-6). He challenged the priests and Levites to help him bring about spiritual renewal (2 Chron. 29:3-19). The king restored the sacrificial system, and the Levites and people praised God and celebrated (29:20-36). He invited all Israel and Judah to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem (30:1-6). Many northern citizens mocked Hezekiah's invitation, but others came (30:7-12). The people celebrated the Passover at a level they had not done since Solomon's days (30:13-27).

Early in Hezekiah's reign, Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 18:9-12). When Assyria's king Sennacherib invaded Judah, Hezekiah initially capitulated to his demands (18:13-16). Sennacherib sent a massive army and delegation to Jerusalem to encourage surrender and warn the people not to trust Hezekiah's assurances of deliverance (18:17-37).

Isaiah the prophet told Hezekiah that God would rescue Judah (19:1-7). However, the Assyrian official returned and again warned the people not to let either Hezekiah or his God deceive them into believing they could win (19:8-13).

Hezekiah went to the temple and prayed for God's deliverance (19:14-19). Isaiah sent a second reply to Hezekiah, assuring him of Assyria's impending defeat (19:20-28). The prophet stated that life in Judah soon would return to normal (19:29). God would defend Jerusalem (19:34). An angel of the Lord decimated the Assyrian camp that night, and Sennacherib returned home (19:35-37).

When Hezekiah became ill, Isaiah told the king he was about to die. But God extended Hezekiah's life by fifteen years after Hezekiah prayed (20:1-11). The king became proud when a Babylonian delegation visited him and foolishly showed them all he had (20:12-13). Isaiah told Hezekiah that one day, the Babylonians would return and exile Judah's citizens (20:14-19).

Hezekiah's son Manasseh succeeded him and reversed his father's policies (21:1-2). He re-established Baal worship and rebuilt the false worship sites his father had destroyed (21:3-9). God's prophets warned disaster would come upon Judah because of the king's sin (21:10-15). Manasseh eventually repented and turned to the Lord after the king of Assyria captured him (2 Chron. 33:10-16), though

much spiritual damage already had occurred. Amon, Manasseh's son, continued Manasseh's evil practices and reigned only two years before he was assassinated (2 Kings 21:19-26).

Notice the goal of Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kings 19:10-19,32-34. How did God's response reflect Hezekiah's goal?

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

THE TAUNT (2 KINGS 19:10-13)

¹⁰ “Say this to King Hezekiah of Judah: ‘Don’t let your God, on whom you rely, deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria. ¹¹ Look, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries: They completely destroyed them. Will you be rescued? ¹² Did the gods of the nations that my predecessors destroyed rescue them — nations such as Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the Edenites in Telassar? ¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, or Ivvah?’”

VERSE 10

This was the third confrontation between Sennacherib and Hezekiah. The first, as mentioned above, was the most aggressive. Sennacherib invaded Judah and captured many of its cities (2 Kings 18:13-16). In the second confrontation, Sennacherib sent a huge contingent of troops to meet Hezekiah's three representatives in Jerusalem (18:17-37). An Assyrian soldier threatened Hezekiah—and asked him a strategic question: “What are you relying on?” (18:19). The third confrontation (19:8-13) was the least aggressive of the three. Evidently no Assyrian military was involved, only messengers spreading Sennacherib's propaganda.

Speaking through his messengers, Sennacherib hit at the heart of both Hezekiah's faith and God's character. Describing Hezekiah's reign, 2 Kings 18:5 states, “Hezekiah relied on the LORD God of Israel; not one of the kings of Judah was like him,

either before him or after him. He remained faithful to the LORD” (2 Kings 18:5-6a).

The royal spokesman in the second confrontation mocked Hezekiah for relying on God. He declared that Hezekiah had no reliable source of help—not from the Egyptians and not from God Himself (18:19-24).

In this, the third confrontation, the messengers repeated the same challenge, telling him not to think he could rely on his God (see 19:10). Easily we can adopt the same thoughts—especially in difficult times. The good news, though, is that we do not have to face challenges by ourselves. We *can* rely on Him.

The Assyrians continued by challenging God’s character, accusing Him of being a liar. Whereas Sennacherib’s royal spokesman had earlier accused Hezekiah of being deceitful (18:29-30), the Assyrians were now proclaiming that by promising to protect Jerusalem, God was deceiving the people.

KEY DOCTRINE: God

God is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. (See Jonah 3:10; Acts 14:15.)

VERSES 11-13

To bolster their claims that Jerusalem was about to be conquered, Sennacherib’s messengers challenged Hezekiah to look at how the Assyrians had *destroyed* other countries. Further, they taunted Hezekiah, asking him if he thought he would fare better than others.

Sennacherib’s messengers began to list the places the Assyrians had conquered. The order in which they are given shows that the messenger was following the route from Assyria and was headed toward Jerusalem. Like dominos, these places had fallen one after another to the Assyrians. One can sense the tension rising as the listeners visualized that the places named were ever closer to Jerusalem. The implication was that Jerusalem would be the next to fall.

How can our past success get in the way of our keeping perspective in life and not thinking too highly of ourselves?

THE PRAYER (2 KINGS 19:14-19)

¹⁴ Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers' hands, read it, then went up to the LORD's temple, and spread it out before the LORD. ¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD: LORD God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you are God — you alone — of all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth. ¹⁶ Listen closely, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see. Hear the words that Sennacherib has sent to mock the living God. ¹⁷ LORD, it is true that the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands. ¹⁸ They have thrown their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but made by human hands—wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. ¹⁹ Now, LORD our God, please save us from his power so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, LORD, are God — you alone.

VERSES 14-15

Delivering the words from Sennacherib by way of a *letter* highlighted the importance of the official message. Rather than be paralyzed by fear, Hezekiah took the letter to the temple. There, he *spread it out* before God. Verse 15 begins with the simple declaration: *then Hezekiah prayed*. Earlier, Hezekiah had asked the prophet Isaiah to pray about the situation. This time, Hezekiah himself took the matter before God.

Hezekiah's actions serve as a perfect example of what God's people should do when faced with challenges and threats. We should come before the Lord in humble prayer and "lay it all out" before Him. Our doing so does not mean we doubt God already knows—He does. It is a picture of our absolute dependence on Him when facing difficulties.

These prayerful actions were vastly different from what Hezekiah did after his first confrontation with Sennacherib. After Sennacherib invaded Judah, Hezekiah apologized to Sennacherib for withholding payments from Assyria; he then stripped the silver

and gold from the palace and temple and sent it to Sennacherib (18:13-16). Trying to handle the situation himself had been a disaster.

Hezekiah's prayer contains three parts. It began with Hezekiah praising God and affirming His glory and power (v. 15). Being *enthroned between the cherubim* was an affirmation of God's power, which stood in stark contrast to Sennacherib's vision of Hezekiah's powerless God. This first part of Hezekiah's prayer closed with the declaration that God *made the heavens and the earth*. Again, the contrast between Hezekiah's God and the gods of other nations was profound. Those "gods" were merely idols created and maintained by human hands. The Lord, though, brought into being the universe and all that exists, using just His voice.

How does envisioning and affirming God's royal power and His work as Creator help us to be able to pray in faith as we present our concerns to Him?

VERSES 16-19

Second, Hezekiah's prayer presented the problem at hand. In asking God to *hear* and to *see*, Hezekiah was asking God to notice what Sennacherib had said and done. He began with Sennacherib's worst offense: he had mocked God.

Hezekiah next outlined what Sennacherib and the other Assyrian kings had done. They had destroyed *nations* and *lands*. This would have included demolishing houses and structures, devastating crops and fields, killing residents, and taking others to Assyria as captives.

The third part of Hezekiah's prayer was a humble yet profound, desperate, and urgent plea: *LORD . . . please save us*. He wanted God to spare Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Hezekiah understood that God's protecting Jerusalem would be a powerful testimony to *all the kingdoms of the earth*; it would demonstrate that the Lord alone is God.

What priorities did Hezekiah reveal in his prayer? What do a person's prayers reveal about his or her priorities?

THE ANSWER (2 KINGS 19:32-34)

³² Therefore, this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria: He will not enter this city, shoot an arrow here, come before it with a shield, or build up a siege ramp against it. ³³ He will go back the way he came, and he will not enter this city. This is the LORD's declaration. ³⁴ I will defend this city and rescue it for my sake and for the sake of my servant David."

VERSE 32

Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God responded to Hezekiah's prayer (19:20). The Lord had heard Sennacherib's blasphemous mocking, hollow bragging, and arrogant rage. God promised to put His hook in Sennacherib's nose and His bit in Sennacherib's lip (vv. 22-28).

In verse 32, God described four things Sennacherib would not do: *enter* Jerusalem, *shoot an arrow* there, use a *shield* to oppose the city, or *build a siege ramp* against the city wall. Sennacherib would not be able to use his best military tactics against Jerusalem.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1850, archaeologists excavated Sennacherib's palace in his capital city of Nineveh. Inside, they discovered a series of stone slabs measuring eight feet tall by eighty feet long that lined the palace walls. Carved in the slabs were scenes depicting Sennacherib besieging Lachish, one of the largest Judean cities he conquered in 701 BC. The scenes showed Assyrian soldiers shooting arrows, taking cover behind their shields, and entering the city by way of a siege ramp they had built. (See 2 Kings 19:32.)

VERSES 33-34

God then named the one thing that Sennacherib would do—he would *go back* home without ever entering the city. Whereas the Assyrians had run other peoples from their cities, God promised to run Sennacherib from Jerusalem. Miraculously, that was what happened. The next morning, inexplicably, Sennacherib’s military encampment was littered with the bodies of 185,000 dead Assyrians. Seeing this, Sennacherib went back to Nineveh, without ever stepping foot in Jerusalem—just as God had said (vv. 35-36).

God defended Jerusalem; He was its shield, and He rescued it from the Assyrians. The Assyrian deaths gave evidence of God’s sovereignty over life and death and of His integrity. He had kept His word to David. (See 1 Chron. 17:7-14.) God proved Himself to be reliable—not a liar. He heard Hezekiah’s prayers. The good news is that He hears ours as well.

How does God defend His name today? How does the way God defends His name today compare to the way God defended His name in the past?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Read 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (God’s promise to David) and 1 Kings 2:3-4 (David’s reiteration of that promise to Solomon). God promised to build David a lasting house and promised to bless all David’s descendants who remained faithful to Him. How do these verses provide a deeper understanding of 2 Kings 19:34?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Pride leads to greater acts of arrogance.
- Believers can humbly approach God in prayer.
- God will defend His name and His people.

What do you need to put in place in your life to guard against pride and arrogance? What steps can you take in the next week to put these guards in place?

Is there a matter or difficulty you need to take to God in prayer? If so, what would that be? Spend some time before the Father, laying it all out.

Share with your Bible study group ways you have seen God answer prayers in the past six months. How does hearing the stories of others encourage you in your prayer life?

PRAYER NEEDS
