

A MAN NAMED

Hezekiah

~ Facing The Challenges of Life ~

COMPROMISE AND CONFRONTATION

(II Kings 18:9-20)

Time moved on, and Hezekiah changed his stance against the pagans. See this as you read II Kings 18:9-20. Verses 9 through 12 tell us when Israel (the northern kingdom) was taken into captivity by the Assyrians. It happened *“in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hosea king of Israel.”* Now the narrative moves up to the most famous story of all about Hezekiah: his conflict with Sennacherib, king of Assyria (the third Assyrian monarch we have met—Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser came and went before him). But often as we read this exciting account, we miss what led up to the conflict. It was (believe it or not) a period of *compromising with evil* by good King Hezekiah. At the first of his reign, he did right (v. 3), attacked wrong (v. 4), trusted the Lord (v. 5), kept His commandments (v. 6), and rebelled against the king of Assyria (v. 7). Now his tune had changed.

1. Beware of getting older.

Why would Hezekiah (or any good man) back off from standing up to evil as he did? A clue can be found in the numbers noted in II Kings 18:

In verse 2, Hezekiah was 25 and doing right.

In verse 9, he was 29.

In verse 10, he was 31.

In verse 13, when the compromising began, Hezekiah was now 39.

Time had passed. When time passes and men get older, they tend to tire of the battle. Galatians 6:9 warns us,

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

We can get *“weary in well doing”*—tired of doing right. For fourteen years, Hezekiah and Judah had been rebelling against the pagan influence of Assyria, but when Sennacherib came and invaded the land, Hezekiah was ready to “throw in the towel.”

“Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.”
(II Kings 18:13-14)

The king was saying, “I’m sorry to have offended you, and I’ll do what you want in order to make amends!” He thought that he could placate evil. He thought that appeasement was the best course in this situation. But Hezekiah wasn’t right, and everyone should take a warning from his compromise to watch out for weakening as you get older. Family pressures, physical problems, and even just the desire for peace and rest can combine to corrupt one’s character. Beware as you reach middle age. God hasn’t changed, and your commitments to Him should not change either!

2. Beware of giving in.

Compromise is an important part of life. Much of compromise is helpful and right. Just ask anyone who has been married for any length of time! We must compromise in some ways in order to live harmoniously with others. But compromising with evil is another thing. Look again at what King Hezekiah did: he did right (v. 3), he attacked wrong (v. 4), he trusted God (v. 5), he kept His commandments (v. 6), he rebelled against the king of Assyria (v. 7), he ran off the Philistines (v. 8), he saw the harm that came to the northern kingdom because they fell into great sin (vs. 9-12), and years later he apologized to the king of Assyria when he invaded Judah and accepted a subservient relationship to him (vs. 13-

14). Then he gave the king of Assyria lots of money (v. 15), and finally he even desecrated the repairs and improvements he had made in the Temple in order to pay the pagan king off (v. 16)! Notice something here. The more Hezekiah backed off and gave in, the more the Assyrians demanded. Beginning in verse 17, they demanded full surrender of the country and captivity for the people. Even though King Hezekiah appeased them, the pagan enemies wanted more. This is the big problem with compromising with evil. There is no end to it.

Churches that lower their standards to get and keep members will soon lower them even more. Christians who throw overboard some of their stricter convictions in order to get along with people, will find that those people will not be satisfied. Some folks won't like you until you surrender the last remnant of your Christianity! Compromise is not the way to deal with evil. Evil is never satisfied with appeasement.

3. Beware of avoiding confrontation.

Some people say that they don't like confrontation. The truth is that very few of us *like* it. Yet confronting wrong is exactly

what we often need to do. It is also true that early, minor confrontation (or conflict) will often *prevent* later, major confrontation and conflict. Hezekiah tried to avoid the face-down with Sennacherib but really he was only postponing it. The great confrontation (which begins in verse 17) was inevitable. Good and evil do not peacefully co-exist for long. The process of compromise postponed the inevitable conflict, but much was lost in that process. It would have been better for Hezekiah to have stood up to the Assyrian king back in verse 13. Everyone has a line he will not cross. Even seemingly weak Christians will not go too far. Sennacherib finally demanded too much. Hezekiah had to stand up to him now. He would rather have died than to yield what the Assyrians demanded. The day of reckoning finally came for him, and it will also come for us. It is best that we not surrender the little things before the Devil demands something big. The courage to confront and oppose wrong even in seemingly minor issues is key to staying on the right track with God!