

Prayer That Works

Lesson 5

Isaiah 36-37

October 9, 2022

Praying When Things Look Bleak

INTRODUCTION

Everyone in this world goes through some kind of trauma: physical injury, emotional grief, financial collapse, marriage disillusionment, children depart from the truth, job loss, car accident, disease, a cancer diagnosis....

Your life and the future may look bleak, out of control, and a seeming disaster. Do you ever question if God is truly loving and all-powerful? Is He really in control? Does He care about you and your situation? Will He hear your prayer?

What does God's Word, the Bible, say when your life looks so bleak? Does it provide examples, guidance, or possible courses of action? Indeed, it does!

In today's lesson, we read an account that shows us the arrogance of the Assyrians and despair in the hearts of the Israelites. But, when Hezekiah, King of Judah, puts his trust in the Lord and commits his own fate and the fate of the Israelites to God, they were delivered from the Assyrian threat.

Memory verse: "Now, Lord, our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, Lord, are the only God."—Isaiah 37:20

Pray, and read Isaiah 36 and 37. What questions or observations do you have about these chapters?

OBSERVATION: What do the passages say?

1. Which king is threatening to attack Jerusalem?
(Isaiah 36:1-2)
2. What were Hezekiah's representatives trying to prevent? What was the Assyrian field commander's reply? (Isaiah 36:11-18)
3. What did Hezekiah do after hearing what the Assyrian field commander said? (Isaiah 37:1-4)
4. What did the prophet Isaiah tell Hezekiah's officials that the Lord says? (Isaiah 37:5-7)
5. When Assyrian King Sennacherib tells Hezekiah not to be deceived by God, where does Hezekiah go, and what does he do?
6. What happens to Sennacherib because of Hezekiah's prayer to God? (Isaiah 37:21-22, 33-38)

INTERPRETATION: What do the passages mean?

1. Why does Sennacherib mention Egypt three times? (Isaiah 36:6, 9) Refer to Isaiah 7 and Bible commentary, if necessary. Note that King Ahaz was King Hezekiah's father.

2. Sennacherib's message to Jerusalem is to not be misled by Hezekiah when Hezekiah says, "The Lord will deliver us." Who is really misleading the people of Jerusalem, and by what influence? (Isaiah 36:16-20)

3. A grieving Hezekiah sent some of his highest officials and the leading priests to visit Isaiah rather than summoning Isaiah into his presence. Why do you think that was? (Isaiah 37:1-2)

4. In Isaiah 14:24-27, Isaiah predicted God would break Assyria's power in the Promised Land. In Isaiah 37:36-38, we see how God kept His promise. Should the fulfillment of this prophecy mean that we should look for a literal fulfillment of Isaiah's far distant prophecies, as well (e.g., God's judgment on persistent rebels and His promise to preserve a remnant of faithful believers who will continue on into the new heavens and new earth in the end times [Isaiah 65:17-66:24])? Why or why not?

APPLICATION: How do the passages apply to your life?

1. In Isaiah 36 we see how Hezekiah listened to the lies from the enemy and still stayed true to God. The Bible says that Satan roams the earth looking for those he can devour (1 Peter 5:8). Praying is still a way for Christians to conquer the enemy today. How is your quiet time with God? How could it be improved? Ask a close Christian friend to help hold you accountable.

2. In Isaiah 37:3-4, Hezekiah asks Isaiah to pray for the remnant that survives the expected Assyrian attack. There is no trouble too small or too large to bring before God. Remember what Jesus said: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7) and “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” (Matthew 21:22) Do you avoid asking God for some things because you feel they are insignificant or wouldn’t matter to Him? If so, what are things you didn’t pray for? Consider writing a prayer for them now.

3. Remember a situation you were in that looked bleak. How did you handle that? Did you question God/blame God? Did you pray to God for help? Did you ask for prayer from others? Do you believe your efforts affected the outcome? Do you feel you should have done something differently? How so?