

10. The Solution to crises

September 14, 2014

Anyone over 8 or 9 years old in America in 2001 would remember what happened in New York City 13 years ago. It started as another Tuesday morning across America. But within 77 minutes, from 8:46 am EST till 10:03 am EST, four planes were crashed; 2,979 people were killed; more than 6,291 people were injured; and countless people were suffering from post-traumatic-stress disorder as a result of 9/11 and it has changed the minds of every single American one way or another. This was one of the biggest crises America has faced.

According to Dictionary.com, crisis is defined as following:

1. a stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, especially for better or for worse, is determined; turning point.
2. a condition of instability or danger, as in social, economic, political, or international affairs, leading to a decisive change.

To some people, every little incident is a crisis and disaster. Those people will be emotionally and even physically frozen when a real crisis comes to them and they become victims. But there is another group of people who take advantage of crises they face and overcome them and they become victors. A crisis does not make a person; rather it shows what a person is made of.

From chapter 36 to 39, king Hezekiah of Judah encountered three crises: the invasion of Assyria, a near-death sickness, and revealing the national treasure to the Babylonian envoys unknowingly.

I strongly believe that the Lord is going to teach us how to trust our God who is the only Solution for all of our crises.

A. INVASION CRISIS

Isaiah 36:4-7 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? 5 I say you speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. Now in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? 6 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. 7 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'?"

Isaiah 36:21 But they held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him."

The military might of Assyria was impressive. They were over 300,000 fighting men strong with chariots and cavalry. It is no wonder that they destroyed every city they invaded.

Rabshakeh which was the title of a Field Commander, not a person's name, was taunting the people in Jerusalem and their God Jehovah from the outside of the Jerusalem wall. His speech was one of the most contemptuous and blasphemous found in the Bible. He used their military threats against Judah's military resources, their alliance with Egypt, and even their God.

While you read this portion of the Book of Isaiah, you would notice that what Rabshakeh said is the exact same pattern satan uses against human minds: In v4-6, he used threats; in v7, he ignored the truth of God; in v8, Rabshakeh demanded worship of his king as satan demands our worship to him; in v10, he falsely represented the Lord; and in v13-17, he offered false promises.

I love the way the people of Jerusalem handled Rabshakeh's babbling. They held their peace. They didn't shout back at him, nor did they start to tremble in fear. This should be a great lesson for many Christians today.

Many of our charismatic denomination friends tend to shout commands to demons as if they can see them with their spiritual eyes and demons would obey their commands. They say, "Demons, I command you in the name of Jesus to do this or that," or "I bind you in the name of Jesus." Or they even say, "I loose the wealth that satan took away from me in the name of Jesus."

I am sure that you've heard similar kinds of comments. Unfortunately, what they do does not have biblical references. I know that they would say, "Yes, we do," then, they would show me Matthew 16:

Matthew 16:19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This was a very familiar phrase to the Jewish people, because their rabbis often spoke of "binding and loosing," that is, forbidding or permitting, nothing to do with limiting the power of demonic forces.

Jesus did not say that God would obey what we do on earth, but that we should do on earth whatever God had already willed. The church does not get man's will done in heaven, rather it obeys God's will on earth.

Furthermore, humans are not authorized anywhere in Scripture to "bind or loose" satan and his demons. Even the archangel Michael did not tackle satan on his own. Despite his wisdom and power, he called on God to rebuke satan in Jude v9. Christians should never suppose that they are smart enough to engage satan or his demons on their own. Rather we, like Michael, should pray, "The Lord rebuke you."

B. SEEKING THE SOLUTION FROM THE LORD

Isaiah 37:14-20 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. 15 Then Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying: 16 "O Lord of hosts, 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. 17 Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. 18 Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19 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 have destroyed them. 20 Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord, You alone."

I just love the way king Hezekiah handled the situation. Since some big mouth out from boondock Assyria was demanding complete surrender, the king surrendered himself to the Lord and let Him handle the Assyrian king.

I want all of you to pay attention to what and how Hezekiah addressed to the Lord here. In v16, he acknowledged who the Lord was – God the Creator of the universe. Once we acknowledge who our God is in our prayers, our once -looked-big-problems become really measly things in light of the power of God. In other words, Hezekiah 's prayer was saturated with sound biblical theologies that we should take heed.

After he acknowledged to the Lord who is, he affirmed his faith in God Almighty who sustains all lives and has a complete control over everything in the universe. The king didn't want deliverance merely for his people's sake, but that God alone might be glorified. Now that's a perfect prayer. When we pray according to God's will, we have this confidence in Him that our prayer will be heard and granted by the Lord. I've quoted these verses many times, but they are worth being repeated:

1 John5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Let's see how the Lord answered Hezekiah's prayer:

Isaiah 37:33-38 "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. 34 By the way that he came, By the same shall he return; And he shall not come into this city,' Says the Lord. 35 'For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" 36 Then 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. 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. 38 Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

Any king or general who loses 185,000 soldiers overnight should be removed. No one can say, "Yup, we sent out a platoon of Rambos and destroyed them all." This is beyond what humans could do. God gets all the glory .

B. A NEAR-DEATH SICKNESS CRISIS

Isaiah 38:1-8 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.'" 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, 3 and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 And the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying, 5 "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. 6 I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.'" 7 And this is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which He has spoken: 8 Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it had gone down.

What happened in chapter 38 was in 712 B.C. prior to chapter 36 and 37 that happened in 701 B.C. We know this by comparing 2 Kings 18:2 and 20:6. Hezekiah

was 39 years old when he learned he would soon die. Not many people get to know when they are going to die, but this king did. Though he was godly and did many great things, he also had pride issue according to other Bible verses.

Hezekiah did not ask God to spare him because he had been such a faithful servant, rather, he asked God to spare him so he could continue to serve and complete the spiritual restoration of the nation. Certainly he was concerned about his own life, as any of us would be; but he also had a burden for his people.

Why was Hezekiah so upset at the idea of his death? Many Christians today would say, "Take me home, Lord!" Yes, I am one of them. But Hezekiah lived under the OT, and at that time there was not a confident assurance of the glory in the life beyond. They used to think that dying at an early age would have been regarded as evidence that God was very displeased with them. But in the NT, Jesus brought life and immortality came to light through the Gospel.

2 Timothy 1:10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel

In fact, God gave two gifts to Hezekiah. First, He gave the gift of an extended life. Second, He gave the gift of knowing he only had fifteen years left. If he were wise, this would still give king Hezekiah the motivation to walk right with God and to set his house in order. I like what Moses wrote in one of his Psalms:

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

There are some Bible students who think that Hezekiah was wrong in asking God to spare his life. Three years later, his son Manasseh was born and he became the most wicked king in the entire dynasty. They say that had Hezekiah died without an heir, this would not have happened. But we have no guarantee that any other successor would have been any better; and Manasseh's grandson was godly king Josiah, who did much to bring the nation back to the Lord. Later Manasseh did repent after God chastened him, and he ended his years serving the Lord. It is unwise for us to second guess God and what He does.

C. SELF-BETRAYAL CRISIS

Isaiah 39:3-7 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 to me from a far country, from Babylon." 4 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." 5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: 6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. 7 '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.'"

After Hezekiah recovered from his illness, he was pumped up. So when the envoys from Babylon came, he didn't consult with the Lord through prophet Isaiah. He just assumed that everything was hunky dory to show off all he had to them. It was foolish of him to try to impress these people.

It is easy to get too puffed up when people compliment or recognize us, and to begin to take their praise and impressed with ourselves – too seriously. I've come across a Calvary Chapel pastor who wrote about himself in his church web site as a conference speaker and once filled in for pastor Chuck Smith at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa.

When satan cannot defeat us as the roaring lion, he comes as the deceiving serpent and an angel of light. What Assyria could not do with weapons, Babylon did with gifts. God permitted the enemy to test Hezekiah so that the proud king might learn what was really in his own heart.

2 Chronicles 32:31 However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the 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.

God gave Hezekiah the gift of 15 more years of life, but the added years did not make him a better or more godly man.

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) While we are facing a challenging situation, the first thing we need to do is go to the Lord in prayer. Rather than just dumping the problem we face to the Lord since He already knows, acknowledge who He is first. You will notice that the big difficulty is not that big any more in light of who our God is.
- 2) Unlike Hezekiah, the most of us do not know how long we are going to live. Live each day to the fullest by loving and serving the Lord, your family, and His people.
- 3) Remember that when satan cannot defeat us as the roaring lion, he comes as the deceiving serpent and an angel of light. Be careful.