



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Jump Start # 1434

2 Kings 20:5 "Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of your father, David, 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord.'"

Hezekiah, one of the few good kings of Judah became ill. He had been a marvelous king. He purged the nation of the idols his father had built. He restored the Passover. He was one of the original restorers. He trusted in the Lord and clung to the Lord. But word came from Isaiah the prophet that he was going to die. "Set your house in order," were the words from the prophet.

Immediately, Hezekiah turned to the wall and prayed. Our passage shows God's answer to his prayer.

A few thoughts here:

1. We would do well if we turned to the wall more and less to Facebook, friends or other things. The word Hezekiah received was the absolute worst anyone could ever hear. Even when doctors reach their limit and they declare that there is no more that can be done, the God option is always there. One can always pray to God. However, when the Lord tells you that you are going to die, there is no one above God. There is no one else to pray to. Hezekiah didn't get angry with the Lord. He didn't run and find his family. He didn't curse. He turned to the wall and prayed.

2. What Hezekiah prayed was remarkable. He asked the Lord to "Remember." His prayer was, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." Remember. He didn't say, "Forget all the wrong things I did." He didn't say, "I repent." He said, "Remember." This is how Nehemiah ends his book, "Remember me for good." For the Lord to remember, there must be something there to remember. Hezekiah had walked in such a way that there were things to remember. He rallied the people back to God. When the Assyrians were about to invade, it was to God that he took the nation. And now, at the moment of a personal battle, Hezekiah doesn't ask God to remove the illness. He doesn't ask for more years. His prayer is, "Remember..."

3. Before Isaiah the prophet left the palace compound, our verse takes place. God turned the prophet around and sent him back to Hezekiah. The word was, "I have heard your prayer and I have seen your tears." God extended Hezekiah's life 15 years.

(OVER)

This is impressive to us. Hezekiah got an answer to his prayer faster than some of us get a reply to our email. Prayers don't take days to be answered. God heard and God acted. He acted very quickly. God saw the tears of the king. Sometimes we may think that no one knows nor understands what we are going through. The elderly saint in a nursing home who is alone most of the time...the family that holds a vigil over a dying parent...a young couple who are wanting to have a baby but can't...a young man who is looking for a better job...an older preacher who is no longer needed nor wanted by a congregation...a family that has a prodigal that will not come back...each of these real situations. I could put names to each of these. Each, causing tears at night among God's people. Tears that the Lord sees. Tears that have been shed for a long while. For some, it seems that they can't cry anymore, but they do. For the rest of us, life goes on. The sun shines, the birds sing, and it's just another day for us. But to those with the tears, the pain and nightmare never seems to end. God knows. God sees. God cares.

There are three answers to our prayers to God. First, like Hezekiah, the answer may be "yes." That answer may come quickly as it did for Hezekiah, or it may take some time. Another answer is "No." No is an answer. It's hard to understand why God says NO. It's hard to take. God sees things we never do. God has plans and a will that involves the spiritual that we often forget about. Our character, our souls and our salvation is much more important than our wellbeing or our happiness. If the journey takes us through dark valleys of death, and that process shapes us and makes us a better people, then it was well worth it. We struggle with that. We want God to remove problems. We want God to make things better. God may be interested in us becoming better.

Then there is the third answer to our prayers, "In His time." God's not on a schedule like we are. In His time, is what Abraham had to understand. Why we wait, thinking God is not doing anything or that He didn't hear us, or that our prayer wasn't good enough, God is just waiting. He knows what is coming and we don't. He sees everything and we only see our little space. God sees the future and we see today. In His time...

The fifteen years that God gave Hezekiah got the king in trouble. He showed off the treasures of Judah to visitors from Babylon. His pride got the best of him. The prophet revealed that the Babylonians would later come and take all that treasure. And they did.

God hears your prayers. God sees your tears. God knows. Trust Him. Love Him. Cling to Him, even in those dark hours when it seems you are all alone. God is there. May He help you.

Roger Shouse