

Put on the full armor of God, so that
when the day of evil comes, you may be
able to stand your ground, and after
you have done everything, to stand.

Ephesians 6:13



Chapter Nine

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Read: 2 Chronicles 29-32



What do you know about Hezekiah? After reading this chapter, you'll know he was righteous, you'll see that he was courageous, and you'll understand why he's been hailed as one of Judah's greatest kings. You'll see that he made every effort to put God first and to serve the needs of his kingdom by bringing their burdens to God. He wasn't perfect, but he was repentant and because of that, he was blessed.

To understand the story of Hezekiah, and the reason he stands out as one of the most courageous men in the Bible, we need to look at who the Assyrians were and what they were capable of. We've read all kinds of stories in the Bible about the battles between Israel

and the enemies that came up against them, but none were as terrifying as the Assyrian army.

Known as “The Lords of Torture,” Historians describe their methods of war as vicious, sadistic, and cruel. Adults and young children alike were captured, impaled, skinned, beheaded, castrated, and burned alive. Images depict Assyrian soldiers forcing Babylonian captives to grind the bones of their families. Others show prisoners being led by chains attached to hooks in their mouths. And, as we see in 2 Chronicles Chapter 32, they used psychological warfare to threaten and discourage those who might come up against them.

2 Kings 18:5 says,

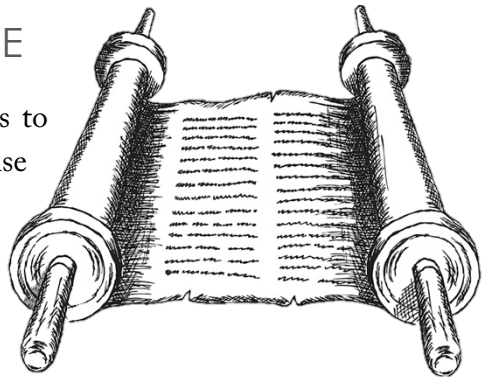
There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.

THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

His first order of business as King was to open the doors of the temple and cleanse it. This wasn't the easiest thing for Hezekiah to do since the temple had been closed for several years. The Israelites had forsaken their faith and turned their back on the Lord. And so,

in a sense, he was introducing a new way of life for the people of Israel.

Many of them had grown accustomed to the ways of King Ahaz who shut the doors of the temple, set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem, and burned sacrifices to other gods. Idol worship was their way of life, and now they were being shown something different.



In 2 Chronicles 30, Hezekiah sent invitations to the people of Israel inviting them to return to the Lord, and while many of them did, others scorned and ridiculed his messengers.

Hezekiah is an example to all new believers who face opposition when they begin their journey through faith. Turning our back on the sinful life we once knew, takes courage. Friends may distance themselves; others might ridicule and scoff the new faith that we've found.

It can be hard when friends and family desert us, which is why we need people like Hezekiah to encourage us in our faith. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord regardless of the opposition he faced. And what did they experience as they worshipped the Lord? Incredible joy, unlike anything they had seen in years!

There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon, son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 30:26)

WHEN HEZEKIAH CAME TO THE CROWN, HE
APPLIED AT ONCE TO WORK REFORM.
THOSE WHO BEGIN WITH GOD, BEGIN AT
THE RIGHT END OF THEIR WORK, AND IT
WILL PROSPER ACCORDINGLY.

—MATTHEW HENRY

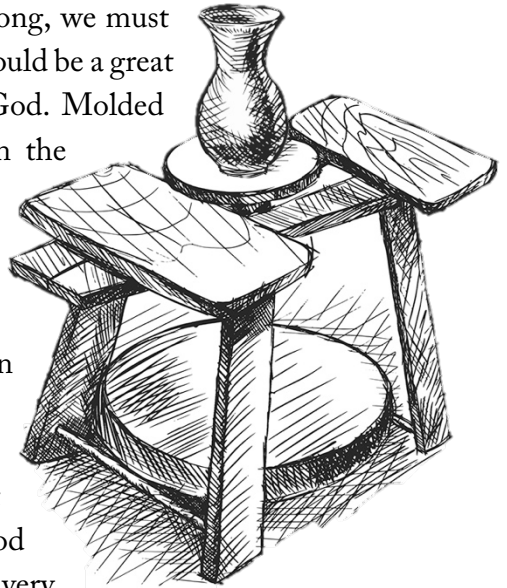
FASHIONED LIKE CLAY

With faithfulness comes tribulation, for it's through temptation we learn faithfulness; through poverty we find contentment; and in fear

we find our courage. If we hope to be strong, we must first be reliant. And so, before Hezekiah could be a great king, he had to humble himself before God. Molded and made, he was fashioned like clay in the hands of a potter.

Charles Spurgeon once said,

“Whenever God means to make a man great, He always breaks him in pieces first. I want to comfort you by showing you that this is God’s way of making something of you... That spade will cut sharply and dig up sod after sod and throw it to one side. The very thing you would like to keep shall be cast away and you shall be hollowed out, and dug out, that the word of Elisha may be fulfilled, ‘Make this valley full of ditches. For thus says the Lord, you shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water.’ You are to be tried, my Friend, that God may be glorified in you!”



And so, Hezekiah was met with opposition. The resistance from the people of Israel, however, was nothing compared to the trial he faced when he took a stand against the king of Assyria.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

To encourage someone is to instill courage in them, which is what Hezekiah did before taking a stand against the Assyrians. The Bible tells us that he appointed military officers over the people and encouraged them with these words,

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. (2 Chronicles 32:6)

These are practically the same words that John used in his letter as he encouraged the church,

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

NO WEAPON FORGED AGAINST YOU WILL
PREVAIL, AND YOU WILL REFUTE EVERY
TONGUE THAT ACCUSES YOU. THIS IS THE
HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD.
(ISAIAH 54:17)

Hezekiah continues,

With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said. (2 Chronicles 32:8)

Hezekiah reminded them that they weren't fighting alone. He knew that the power of God was greater than any power on earth, and that God would protect and sustain them.

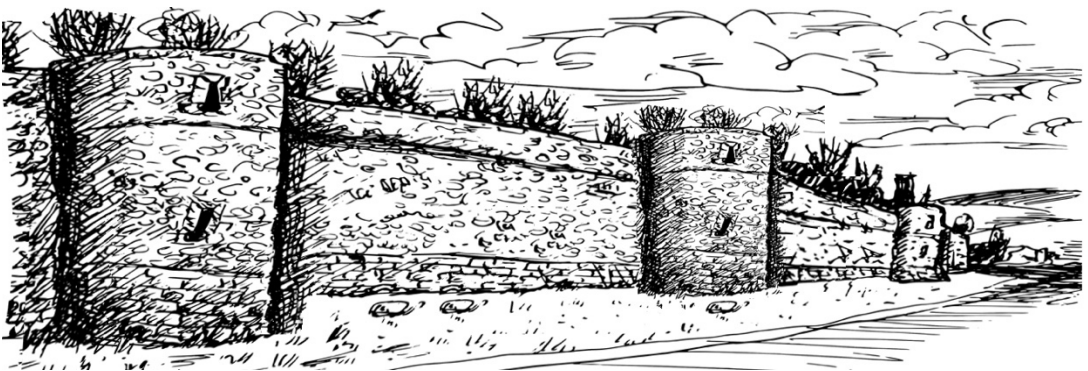
Regardless of what you are up against, and whatever it is you might fear, whether it's a person coming for you or a problem that you doubt you can solve, you can always be sure that your problems are no match for God.

PREPARE FOR THE BATTLE

Hezekiah prepared for the battle. 2 Chronicles 32, tells us that he gathered a group of people and together they blocked off the water that flowed through the land. They prepared the broken sections of the wall and built towers on it. They reinforced the wall around the city and built a second wall around that. They made many weapons and shields.

DID YOU KNOW

PART OF A WALL WHICH COULD WELL BE HEZEKIAH'S HAS BEEN UNCOVERED ON THE WESTERN HILL. AT SEVEN METRES THICK, IT IS THE THICKEST IRON AGE WALL KNOWN IN PALESTINE.
(MARK SELMAN'S COMMENTARY ON 2 CHRONICLES)



Adversity does one of two things: it either strengthens us or it defeats us, and if you're not strong in your faith, you won't be strong in the fight. And so, we need to prepare for tomorrow's battle today. Holding on to the joy that flows like a river from the Spirit within. Reinforcing the walls of protection by drawing closer to God. Standing firm in our faith with every weapon and shield that we have.

Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13)

— DID YOU KNOW —

GOD DESTROYED THE ASSYRIAN ARMY WITHOUT HEZEKIAH AND HIS MEN LIFTING A HAND. 2 KINGS 19:35 TELLS US THAT THE ANGEL OF THE LORD SMOTE 185,000 OF THEIR MEN IN ONE NIGHT.

IT WAS NOT BY THEIR SWORD THAT THEY WON THE LAND, NOR DID THEIR ARM BRING THEM VICTORY; IT WAS YOUR RIGHT HAND, YOUR ARM, AND THE LIGHT OF YOUR FACE, FOR YOU LOVED THEM.
(PSALM 44:3)

PAUSE REFLECT

What was his first order of business as king?

How was King Hezekiah different from his father?

What happened to the messengers in 2 Chronicles Chapter 30 when they delivered the invitations on behalf of King Hezekiah?

What does 1 Peter 4:14 say? Write the verse out here:

What steps did Hezekiah take to prepare for the battle?

What does 1 Peter 4:14 say? Write the verse out here:

How should we prepare for tomorrow's battle today?

What does the word encourage mean?

What does the word discourage mean?

According to Romans 15:4, what 2 things give us hope?

What are the six (let's make that seven) pieces of armor listed in Ephesians 6:10-18?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

What happened after Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed?