

## **Don't Slow God Down**

'A new pastor preached his first sermon at his new church. He preached a wonderful sermon: "Repent, repent, repent! The kingdom of God is at hand. Go and repent". Everyone loved the sermon, and some even said it was the best sermon they had ever heard. On his second Sunday in the pulpit, the new pastor preached the same sermon, "Repent, repent, repent! The kingdom of God is at hand. Go and repent". Since most of the parishioners did not remember last week's sermon, once again many responded that it was the best sermon they had ever heard. On his third Sunday, the pastor again preached the same sermon, word for word. This time, his listeners began to stir and were disturbed. They approached the governing board of the church and directed them to look into the matter. On the fourth Sunday the new minister preached the same sermon once again, "Repent, repent, repent! The kingdom of God is at hand. Go and repent". The church board called in the new pastor for a full explanation. His answer: Yes, he was able to preach other sermons. Yes, he did have other sermons. Yes, he did want to preach other sermons. The problem? He would preach another sermon as soon as the congregation repented!'

Seems that new pastor was a strict one! Would like it more

that way? In actual fact, however, it ultimately doesn't matter what people like. If the preacher is hearing from Holy Spirit, then that is what needs to be preached. Whether the people like it or not. Think of the many prophets in the Old Testament. They preached what the Lord told them to. And most of them, they paid for it with their lives. For most of the people to whom they spoke didn't care for what they were hearing. So much so that eventually they got rid of the irksome prophets, and really sinned by silencing them, permanently, by just up and arranging their murder.

Consider now King Hezekiah. He is ranked as one of the three best kings of Judah, second perhaps to Josiah, and certainly to David. But he was a man, like all of us. Therefore, he was far from perfect. Yet he was a great reformer, re-instituting the proper worship of God in the Temple, whose doors he reopened, for they had been nailed shut by his father, the wicked King Ahaz. All so the people could not worship God even if they wanted to! Ahaz had outlawed true worship to force people to worship idol gods. Hezekiah reversed all this, restoring the priesthood and Levitical service as it had been established so many centuries earlier. In all these things Hezekiah was a great king.

From our scripture lessons the last few weeks, we see he was a skilled leader. At least most of the time. When the Assyrian king came demanding that Judah surrender to Assyrian rule, Hezekiah had made many preparations. A new, stronger wall had been built, the military strengthened, and most importantly, the

Gihon spring diverted into the city proper by the building of a massive tunnel, 1,750 feet long, that both prevented enemy forces from having access to water while at the same time ensuring Jerusalem would never run dry. But none of what he accomplished was possible without the Lord blessing his efforts. Hezekiah was a man of prayer, as we've seen in these accounts from Isaiah. Unlike so many other kings, Hezekiah both valued and actively sought out Isaiah's counsel, particularly the divine words God spoke through the prophet. Though the two men were distantly related by marriages, it is likely they were more than just associates in the palace. Due to their mutual love of God, they were probably good friends as well.

But Hezekiah didn't always listen. He didn't always pray. He messed up every now and then. His prayer to God regarding the Assyrian threat was beautiful. And effective. God loves to hear, indeed, demands that those who pray be humble. For when there is humility God can respond. Conversely when there is pride, God can not respond. God will not respond. It's far too easy to think we outgrow our britches. When in fact, the britches the Lord provides us we'll never outgrow. God desires us to grow in glory, from glory to glory. Not our glory, but His. For all glory comes from and goes to God. Trying to get any glory for ourselves is a fatal mistake. For to attempt such is, in reality, idolatry of the worst kind. To try to gain glory for one's self is tantamount to worshipping one's self! And that is a direct, flagrant and blatant viola-

tion of the very first of the Ten Commandments.

Which brings us to Hezekiah's prayer when faced with his imminent death. Now we might be able to excuse him for his wild choice of words, for he was, sort of, grasping at straws, in his pleading with God to heal him. He was, after all, only 39 years old at this point. Which was an early age to die. It seems that even at this age, he did not have any heirs to the throne. Which seems to have been another reason God extended his life. For God had promised King David that there would always be one of his descendants on the throne in Jerusalem, forever. Meaning that David's dynasty would be eternal. We know that this can only be fulfilled by Christ Jesus Himself, Who was a descendant of David through both Mary's ancestry, as well as His step father, Joseph's. But since God is God, He has any number of ways to accomplish His word and purposes.

It seems that the real reason God answered Hezekiah's prayer for healing and life extension was because of Hezekiah's heartfelt tears. We know from Psalm 56:8 that God collects our each and every tear in a supernatural bottle. That is just another evidence of how immensely deep God's love for us actually is. God specifically mentions Hezekiah's tears, and not only promises to both heal and lengthen his life, but even to give the king a supernatural sign to prove the answer was on its way. To ask for a sign can indicate a lack of faith, but God often likes to give us signs so that our faith will grow and be strengthened. And here

God causes the sun's shadow to retreat 10 steps which results in the lengthening of that particular day by several minutes if not several hours. We don't know now where the stairway of Ahaz was, or the angle at which the sun's rays cast a shadow on it. It's a question we can ask the Lord in the future, if we so care to. The point is that God did it, and did it in an undoubtedly inexplicable way. Causing the shadow to go forward would be essentially speeding up time for whatever amount that was. Or God could have simply stopped time from advancing for the ten steps worth of time. But causing the shadow to go backwards is by far the most inconceivable, most "impossible", most God-like thing to do.

And then, God used a poultice Isaiah made of dried figs to apply to Hezekiah's otherwise fatal sores. Why did God use something from earth to accomplish the healing? He could have just willed it, but it served God's higher purposes, and Hezekiah's as well, to do it this way. For God truly does use the things of this earth that He created to advance His purposes, to do everything He wills. And likewise, God not just prefers, but seems to have made it a "natural law" that He will not do anything on this earth without using human beings, made of this earth, to truly be His hands and feet, as it were. Or most often, our mouths. Our tongues. Which is why the whole concept of speaking in tongues is so important. God has given us practically the same authority as His Own to speak into existence His will. All too often we're confused about what God's exact will is in any given situation, let

alone how to make it happen. Praying in tongues, or even just our normal words, allows us to speak audibly out into this physical earth, this physical atmosphere, the very will and power of God to do what He wills. When we so pray, we become the authority of God on the earth. If we truly belong to Christ Jesus, the very Word of God; if we're little "christs", if He truly meant that what we bind on earth is bound in Heaven and what we loose on earth is loosed in Heaven, then what comes out of our mouths has tremendous consequence. We are to speak God's will into existence, but as our reading from Jacob (James) cautions, all too often our mouths spew forth destruction, devastation, and even death wishes on others and even ourselves. We must needs take control of our words.

No doubt, our prayers especially are required for God to act. If we don't pray, we slow Him down. We hinder His will from manifesting. Our prayers pave the way for Him to do as He pleases. Which is why we must allow Holy Spirit to not only live within us, but to speak to us inwardly 24/7. Meaning that we have to learn to listen. And then understand and speak forth what we hear the Father speaking through Holy Spirit to us. But many things are already self-evidently God's will. He is pro-life. He is pro Israel. He is pro righteousness. He hates lies. He hates immorality. Such simple, unmistakable things. So pray them. Pray them for America. It'll make more of them appear. And the more of us pray, the faster they'll come about! So don't slow God down!

