

Text: II Kings 19:14-19

Title: “Praying Your Way Through Confusion”

INTRODUCTION

There’s something deep inside our spirit that longs to connect with God. We were created in the image of God, and our spirit must connect with His Spirit. And that is the experience of prayer. People try to get through to God or to their god in prayer, no matter what religion they claim.

ILLUSTRATION – For example hundreds of thousands of Muslims who live in India will travel this month to northwest India where there is a shrine built over the tomb of a Muslim Sufi saint. Indian Muslims travel there to commemorate his death, in spite of the fact that this is the hottest time of the year in India when temperatures reach more 110 degrees. Why? These pilgrims believe they will have their prayers answered and problems solved by praying at the shrine during this special occasion.

Praying to a false god may give someone some comfort, but because false gods are only imaginary, there’s no connection. But the One True God was revealed Himself through His Son Jesus Christ, and the only way to get through to Him is through Christ. And when we come to God through Christ we can actually have a relationship with Him and know that He is there and that He hears us and responds when we cry out to Him. But without the help of the Holy Spirit we are just talking to ourselves. So prayer is the great privilege we have to come to God and worship Him and pour out our burdens to Him.

Now Jesus taught us to pray properly in His Model Prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer. And in that prayer He said, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” So one big purpose for prayer is to insure that God’s will is done in our lives. Nothing drives us to our knees more than the realization that we cannot make important decisions without God’s guidance.

ILLUSTRATION – There have been times along the way in my life where I was at the end of my wits. I honestly didn’t know what to do. I had no solutions. But someone taught me long ago that if you know enough to get before God with your problem, then you know enough to get you through. And my prayer journal is filled with countless answers to prayer where I cried out to God for wisdom and He showed me the way to go.

So I want you to think with me today about praying your way through confusion to a place of clarity. Right decisions are not always easy to discern, so believers must pray through until we hear from God. A godly Old Testament king provides a powerful example for us. We read about it in II Kings 19. Open your Bibles to that portion of God’s Word. I’ll read just two verses then explain the context for you. Read II Kings 19:14-15a.

Let me just explain...

1. THE CONFUSING CIRCUMSTANCES (v.14a)

The king of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) at this point in history was a godly man by the name of

Hezekiah. But things were not going well for the people of God. Judah had been invaded by the Assyrian army under the command of King Sennacherib. They conquered one town after another until they came to the important city of Lachish (lake-ish) just 25 miles or so from Jerusalem. They conquered Lachish, then turned their sights on Jerusalem. From Lachish Sennacherib sent his commander with a message for King Hezekiah in Jerusalem: “It is futile for you to resist me. There’s no ally that can save you. Your God can’t even save you from my mighty power. Surrender to me, and I will take it easy on you.” Then the commander turned and shouted to the people in their native tongue, “Don’t let King Hezekiah deceive you into thinking that you can trust your God to save you. Surrender to me and I’ll take care of you. If you doubt me, just look at all the other nations that have depended on their gods to save them. Not a one of them could withstand my power.” Finally Sennacherib sent a letter directly to Hezekiah threatening to destroy Jerusalem if he didn’t surrender. And the Bible says...

2 Kings 19:14a - Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it.

So Hezekiah is in a quandary. Should he fight? Should he surrender? Should he find an ally? And we understand what Hezekiah is going through. We’ve all been there at some time or the other when we’re faced with confusing circumstances and we don’t know what to do.

- A high school graduate who is not sure what to do with her life
- A seminary graduate who is not sure what direction his ministry will take after seminary
- An executive who has to make a decision that will affect the lives of hundreds of employees
- A wife whose husband surprises her by saying he wants a divorce

Life is filled with confusing circumstances where we don’t know which way to turn. Well, let’s see what godly King Hezekiah does.

2. THE CRUCIAL DECISION (v.14b)

What does Hezekiah do with this threatening letter? Does he try to make a decision relying on his own wisdom? Does he call his trusted advisors together to get their opinion? Notice what he does:

2 Kings 19:14b - Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.

The king went to that place where he knew he could get in the presence of God. He went to that place where God had met him before ... to that place that King Solomon dedicated with the prayer, “Lord, when Your people face challenges in life ... or when they face a mighty enemy in battle, when there’s a famine or there’s no rain in the land, or when they have sinned and need forgiveness, and Your people who are called by Your name humble themselves and pray to You in this place, hear from heaven and bless your people with what they need.”

Hezekiah didn’t have all the answers, but he knew the most important thing for him to do was to get in the presence of God in order to make this decision.

And when we face those tough, confusing decisions in life, if you know enough to get before God with it, you know enough to get you through.

I think about when King Jehoshaphat received the news that a great army was marching against him. The Bible says that he resolved to inquire of the Lord. He proclaimed a fast, and then he prayed:

2 Chronicles 20:12 - O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.”

Even better, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knew that He dare not do anything without first getting in the presence of His Father. Jesus said...

John 5:19 - “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

So we can learn from our Savior. During His 33 years on this earth He lived in such perfect oneness with the Father and He completed every assignment the Father gave Him. He never failed to do the will of the Father because He was one with the Father and always looked to the Father in every matter.

ILLUSTRATION – Perhaps you have seen the recently released movie “42,” the story of Jackie Robinson's joining the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 as Major League Baseball’s first black player. There’s an amazing story that goes beyond Jackie Robinson. Branch Rickey was the Dodger's president who took the historic and controversial step to sign Jackie Robinson. Branch Rickey was a believer who attended the Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn, a famous church. The pastor was a man named Wendell Fifield. One day while Rickey was trying to decide if he should sign Jackie Robinson, he abruptly barged into his pastor's study and told the pastor, "Don't let me interrupt. I just want to be here. Do you mind?" The pastor agreed. According to the pastor’s wife nearly an hour passed without the two men speaking a word to each other. The pastor went about his work, and Rickey paced the floor, stopping from time to time to look out of the office window. Finally, Rickey stopped his pacing and pounded his fist on the pastor's desk and shouted, "I've got it!" The pastor asked, “Got what, Branch?” Finally Branch Rickey sat down and relaxed in a chair and told his pastor about the decision to bring Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers. He said, “This was so complex, fraught with so many pitfalls but filled with so much good, if it was right, I just had to work it out in this room with you. I had to talk to God about it and be sure what he wanted me to do. I hope you don't mind.” He said, “Pastor, I've decided to sign Jackie Robinson.” Decades later people talked about the struggle Branch Rickey went through in making the decision. One well-known journalist told Rickey that “all hell would break loose” when Robinson took the field. Rickey quietly replied, “I believe all heaven will rejoice.”

You see, when we have important decisions to make, we have to get before God. Otherwise we will not have the assurance that we have done the right thing.

Well once Hezekiah made the crucial decision to take his burden to the Lord notice...

3. THE DESPERATE PRAYER (v.15a)

2 Kings 19:15a - And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD...

So Hezekiah knew he needed to pray his way through the confusion to a place of clarity. And you and I need to make our decisions only after we have prayed.

James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Hezekiah's prayer covers everything that effective praying should be:

- **Heartfelt praise**

When we approach God we must first turn to Him to praise Him for who He is. Powerful praying is based on personal knowledge of the Lord. Look at how he starts his prayer:

2 Kings 19:15 - And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Hezekiah understood that the Lord was the "God of Israel" who made a covenant with Israel and time after time delivered them. He was enthroned between the cherubim. That's a reference to the Ark of the Covenant that rested in the Holy of Holies, signifying the glory of God. There are many kingdoms of the world, but the Lord is really God over them all. And on top of all that He is the Creator of the universe.

Is that the way your prayer begins? Just stop to think about the last time you spent time praying about something. How much of God was in it?

2 Kings 19:18 - They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands.

Notice that Hezekiah talks about "their gods" (v.18) and he talks about "our God" (v.19): living vs. dead; enthroned vs. limited; eternal vs. destructible; unmade vs. made.

And this is heartfelt praise. Hezekiah is putting his heart into his praise. Six times in this prayer he says, "O Lord."

- **An honest perspective**

Hezekiah has brought the threatening letter with him into the Temple, and he spreads it out before the Lord. He is honest about what's going on.

2 Kings 19:17 - "It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands.

Friends, just be honest with God in your praying. You can pour out everything to Him. It's not that He doesn't already know, because He does. Prayer is comforting to us when we are able to be honest with God about all that we are facing, along with our own shortcomings and sin. We know that He loves us and cares about what concerns us.

Next there is...

- **A humble petition**

So Hezekiah finally gets around to asking God for something:

2 Kings 19:16 - Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

The need is very simple:

2 Kings 19:19a - Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand...

And then the next component of effective praying is:

- **A holy purpose**

Now this is something that we often miss in our praying. Notice the last thing Hezekiah says...

2 Kings 19:19b – So that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God.”

Hezekiah's main concern was not that he would have wisdom. His main concern was not that his people would be spared. His main concern was the glory of God ... that God's activity would result in all the kingdoms of the earth knowing that the Lord alone is God.

ILLUSTRATION – One of our secretaries here at the church is getting married soon. She told me about the decision that she and her fiancé were making about how their wedding would be conducted. She said that she didn't want the focus on her as the bride, but that God would be glorified as the wedding was conducted. She and her sister share an apartment in a complex where many refugees from a particular nation are housed. So the young bride-to-be and her fiancé decided that they would have their wedding at a church and invite all the refugees in their apartment complex. They invited a pastor from this nation to perform their ceremony and to preach the Gospel to these refugees in their language. They're expecting 400 hundred of their neighbors to come. And that's the result of praying for God's will so that He would be glorified before a watching world.

CONCLUSION

Well, we would be surprised if God didn't answer this powerful prayer of Hezekiah. And God did. Hezekiah sought the wisdom of God about what to do, and God sent a very special messenger with a word from the Lord for Hezekiah.

2 Kings 19:20 - Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria.

Remember, this is exactly what Hezekiah prayed ... “Lord, hear our prayer” (v.16).

And the Lord didn't just hear ... He moved ... He acted ... He intervened ... He gave direction. Hezekiah was not to surrender to Sennacherib; but neither was he to fight. God said through Isaiah, “I will defend this city and save it.” Hezekiah didn't know how God would intervene, he just knew He would. An amazing thing happened.

2 Kings 19:35 - That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies!

2 Kings 19:36 - So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

When your life gets confusing, and you don't know what to do, if you know enough to get before God with your problem, you know enough to get you through. God will make a way. Wait for Him.