**Perilous Good Times**

Occasionally we will contemplate the possibility of being challenged for our faith in Jesus Christ. It certainly has happened to Christians in the past and still happens in other parts of the world. We would like to think that we would stand firm in our faith despite threats to our physical wellbeing.

What we sometimes fail to consider is the danger that complacency poses for our souls when everything seems to be going our way. The life of Hezekiah, king of Judah around 700 BC provides an excellent case study in this very principle.

Hezekiah is described by God as a righteous king, one of the best Judah ever had. 2 Kings 18:6 tells us that he “clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.” And there were some difficult times that put Hezekiah’s faith to the test.

For the first fourteen years of his reign, Hezekiah instituted extensive reforms in Judah and God blessed him as a result. But then everything in his world came crashing down seemingly all at once. Sennecherib, king of Assyria captured the fortified cities of Judah and sent a large army to threaten Jerusalem. It appears from the Scriptures that, at the same time, Hezekiah was stricken with a fatal illness. In fact, Isaiah the prophet informed him that he would not survive.

On both accounts, Hezekiah put his trust in God and pleaded for his help in repelling the Assyrians and in restoring his health. In 2 Kings 20:6, God tells Hezekiah, “I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria.” And of course, God fulfilled both promises. Hezekiah had placed his trust exactly where it belonged.

The irony in Hezekiah’s story is that his greatest spiritual danger came when he was at peace and was enjoying great prosperity. The only criticism the Holy Spirit offers of Hezekiah is that he was guilty for a brief period of having a prideful heart. God had blessed him beyond measure and he made the grave mistake of taking a Babylonian envoy on a guided tour of his great wealth. Apparently that tour left a lasting impression on his visitors and they were back a few generations later to steal it all, destroy Jerusalem and take the people of Judah away into captivity. To Hezekiah’s credit, he once again humbled himself at the rebuke of God’s prophet, Isaiah.

I believe most Christians today would face overt threats with steadfast determination. The true test is whether we will consistently put Christ first in our lives when the allure of material things and the cares of this life are attempting to consume more and more of our time and attention. The good life can become a source of pride for us. We may begin to lay up treasures on the earth, and these are the very things that can deteriorate and be stolen (Matthew 6:19).

We must be humble enough to recognize that only the things of God are steadfast and reliable; the things that can never be taken from us. Good times can lull us into a sense of complacency; a sense that half-hearted service to God is good enough. In good times or bad, we must be determined to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”. If we do, God will be pleased with us regardless of our circumstances.

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