SUNDAY

When Flattery Becomes a Trap

Isaiah 39:1–2 (KJV) At that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

Devotional Do you remember show and tell at school? It was one of those special days when you could bring something from home, show it off to the class, and tell everyone why it was so special to you.

We all like showing off the things we are proud of. As children, it might have been a toy, a special collection, or something we had accomplished. But the desire to show off doesn't necessarily disappear when we grow up.

King Hezekiah learned this lesson the hard way.

Hezekiah was one of the greatest reformers in the history of Judah. His father, Ahaz, had been an exceedingly wicked king who practiced idolatry, participated in child sacrifice, desecrated the temple, and eventually shut down its services. Yet Hezekiah became a remarkably different kind of king.

He removed idolatry, destroyed the high places, reopened the temple, restored worship, and reinstated the Passover. When the Assyrian army threatened Jerusalem, Hezekiah cried out to God, and the Lord delivered the city.

The Bible gives him a remarkable testimony: “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” (2 Kings 18:5).

But after all these victories, Hezekiah made a terrible mistake. When the king of Babylon sent letters and a present following his illness, Hezekiah was glad to receive them. He was flattered. And what did he do? He showed them everything.

His silver, gold, treasures, spices, precious ointments, and military resources. Nothing was left unseen. Perhaps he thought this was an opportunity to establish a relationship with a powerful foreign nation. Perhaps he wanted Babylon to recognize how wealthy and influential Judah had become. Whatever his motivation, he failed to recognize the danger.

Sometimes the devil cannot defeat us through persecution or opposition. Sometimes he uses flattery. When we become more concerned about impressing others than glorifying God, we become vulnerable to spiritual pride.

Hezekiah had experienced incredible victories, but he forgot where those victories came from. This is an important lesson for us. The blessings God gives us are not trophies to display for our own glory. They are reasons to give Him glory.

We must be especially careful when people begin recognizing our accomplishments, admiring our knowledge, or praising our influence. The question is not whether we have something worth showing. The question is whether our lives point people toward God or toward ourselves.

Prayer Heavenly Father, help me recognize the danger of pride and flattery. Forgive me for the times I have sought recognition or admiration rather than giving You the glory. Remind me that every blessing, ability, and accomplishment comes from You. Help me remain humble in times of success and faithful in times of testing. May my life be a testimony of Your goodness rather than an advertisement for my own accomplishments. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Further Study Additional Bible Reading

• 2 Kings 18:1–8 – The reforms and faithfulness of Hezekiah.

• 2 Kings 19:14–37 – Hezekiah’s prayer and God’s deliverance from Assyria.

• 2 Kings 20:1–11 – Hezekiah’s illness and miraculous recovery.

• Isaiah 39:1–2 – The Babylonian ambassadors.

• Proverbs 16:18 – Pride goes before destruction.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Hezekiah responded so positively to the attention and recognition from Babylon?

2. How can flattery become a spiritual danger, even for someone who has experienced great victories with God?

3. What are some ways we can make sure our accomplishments point others toward God rather than toward ourselves?

MONDAY

When We Want the Glory

2 Chronicles 32:25 (KJV) But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Devotional Hezekiah had experienced something extraordinary. God had delivered Jerusalem from one of the greatest military powers of the ancient world. He had also miraculously restored Hezekiah's health and granted him fifteen additional years of life.

He had every reason to be thankful. But 2 Chronicles 32:25 reveals something troubling: His heart was lifted up.

The problem wasn't that Hezekiah had been successful. The problem was that his success began affecting his heart. He started looking at what he possessed rather than remembering who had provided it.

This is one of the greatest dangers of spiritual pride. We can begin our walk with God in humility, recognizing our complete dependence upon Him. But as we grow in knowledge, influence, experience, or accomplishments, we can gradually begin taking credit for things that belong to God.

We may become proud of our Bible knowledge, our ministry, our church, our accomplishments, or even our understanding of prophecy. And before we know it, we are doing spiritual show and tell.

We want people to recognize how much we know, how much we have accomplished, or how much better our understanding is than theirs. But the glory belongs to God.

Paul asked the Corinthians an important question: “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Everything we have received is a gift. Even our spiritual understanding should produce humility rather than pride.

Interestingly, the Bible tells us that Hezekiah eventually humbled himself after his heart was lifted up (2 Chronicles 32:26). That is encouraging. When we recognize our pride, we don't have to continue down that path. We can humble ourselves before God and return to the right spirit.

The greatest evidence of spiritual growth is not how much we can show others. It is how much the character of Christ is being formed in us. Let us not become so preoccupied with displaying our spiritual treasures that we forget the One who gave them to us.

Prayer Father, search my heart and reveal any pride that has taken root in my life. Help me recognize when I am seeking the approval of others instead of seeking Your approval. Keep me humble in my knowledge, my accomplishments, and my service. Teach me to give You the glory for everything You have done in my life. May I become more like Jesus rather than more impressed with myself. Amen.

Further Study Additional Bible Reading

• 2 Chronicles 32:24–26 – Hezekiah’s pride and repentance.

• 1 Corinthians 4:6–7 – Everything we possess has been received.

• James 4:6–10 – God gives grace to the humble.

• Philippians 2:3–8 – The humility of Jesus Christ.

• Jeremiah 9:23–24 – Glorying in knowing the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. Why can spiritual accomplishments sometimes become a source of pride rather than gratitude?

2. What are some ways Christians can unintentionally engage in spiritual show and tell?

3. How can we recognize when we are seeking the glory that belongs to God?

TUESDAY

Be Careful Who You Impress

Isaiah 39:3–4 (KJV) Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.

Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

Devotional Hezekiah's mistake was more serious than simply showing off his wealth. He had opened the door to Babylon.

Isaiah came to the king and asked two important questions: Who were these men, and what had they seen? Hezekiah proudly explained that they had come from a distant country and that he had shown them everything. But Isaiah understood the danger.

The Babylonians were not simply curious visitors. Babylon would eventually become the instrument through which Judah experienced captivity and destruction.

Sometimes we become so excited about gaining the attention or approval of someone that we fail to consider what kind of influence we are inviting into our lives. We want the recognition, the relationship, the opportunity, or the alliance. But we don't stop to consider the consequences. If you ally yourself with Babylon, you may eventually find yourself in Babylon.

Throughout Scripture, Babylon represents much more than an ancient city. It becomes a symbol of rebellion against God and a system opposed to His kingdom. In Revelation, Babylon is again presented as a corrupt religious and worldly power from which God's people are called to separate.

We must be careful about the influences we welcome into our homes, our churches, our minds, and our families. This doesn't mean we should isolate ourselves from the world or refuse to interact with people who believe differently. Jesus Himself spent time with those who needed the truth.

But there is a difference between reaching people and allowing their values to shape us. The question is not simply who we are trying to influence. It is also who is influencing us.

Hezekiah wanted to impress Babylon. But he failed to recognize that Babylon would eventually take far more than it gave. We should never trade our spiritual inheritance for the approval of the world.

Prayer Lord, give me discernment concerning the influences I allow into my life. Help me recognize when the desire for acceptance or recognition is leading me toward compromises that could harm my faith and my family. Teach me to reach others without allowing the world to shape my values. May my loyalty always remain with Your kingdom. Amen.

Further Study Additional Bible Reading

• Isaiah 39:1–7 – Isaiah warns Hezekiah about Babylon.

• 2 Chronicles 18:1–3 – Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab.

• 2 Corinthians 6:14–18 – The importance of spiritual separation.

• Romans 12:1–2 – Not being conformed to this world.

• Revelation 18:1–5 – God’s call to come out of Babylon.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the desire for acceptance and recognition sometimes more dangerous than direct opposition?

2. What is the difference between influencing the world for Christ and allowing the world to influence us?

3. What are some modern forms of Babylonian influence that Christians should be discerning about?

WEDNESDAY

The Treasures of Our Fathers

Isaiah 39:5–7 (KJV) Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Devotional When Isaiah confronted Hezekiah, he delivered a devastating prophecy. Everything in the king's house would eventually be carried away to Babylon. Even the treasures that previous generations had carefully stored would be taken.

The phrase “that which thy fathers have laid up in store” deserves our attention. Certainly, it included silver, gold, precious objects, and valuable possessions. But there were also treasures associated with the worship of God.

Think about the history of Judah. For generations, the people had possessed objects and vessels associated with the sanctuary and the worship of the Lord.

Even the bronze serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness had been preserved for centuries before Hezekiah destroyed it because the people had turned it into an object of idolatry (2 Kings 18:4). These were reminders of God's dealings with His people.

Yet now, because of the decisions made by one generation, the treasures of the nation would be carried away. This should make us think about what we are leaving behind for the next generation.

We often think about inheritance in terms of money, property, possessions, and material security. But what about our spiritual inheritance? What are we passing along to our children?

Are we preserving a love for God's Word? Are we teaching them to recognize truth and reject deception? Are we demonstrating what it means to live faithfully before God?

It is possible to leave our children a comfortable home and a financial inheritance while failing to give them the spiritual foundation they need.

We must remember that our decisions do not affect only ourselves. Hezekiah's actions had consequences that extended beyond his own lifetime. Our choices today are shaping the spiritual environment in which the next generation will grow.

May we be faithful stewards of the treasures God has entrusted to us, especially the truth of His Word.

Prayer Heavenly Father, help me recognize the responsibility I have toward the next generation. Teach me to value spiritual treasures above material possessions. Help me preserve and pass along a love for Your Word, a commitment to truth, and a desire to follow Jesus. May the decisions I make today strengthen the faith of those who come after me rather than weaken it. Amen.

Further Study Additional Bible Reading

• Isaiah 39:5–8 – The prophecy of Babylonian captivity.

• Deuteronomy 6:4–9 – Teaching God’s commandments to our children.

• Psalm 78:1–8 – Passing the knowledge of God to future generations.

• 2 Timothy 1:3–5 – The faith passed through generations.

• Proverbs 13:22 – Leaving an inheritance for future generations.

Discussion Questions

1. What spiritual treasures should we be most concerned about passing along to our children?

2. How can our decisions today affect the spiritual condition of future generations?

3. What is the difference between providing children with material security and preparing them spiritually for the challenges they will face?

THURSDAY

Who Is Training the Next Generation?

Daniel 1:3–4 (KJV) And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Devotional The prophecy given through Isaiah eventually became reality. Jerusalem was conquered, and many of its people were carried away to Babylon. Among those taken were young men from the royal family and the nobility.

Daniel 1 gives us a fascinating description of what happened next. The king of Babylon selected young men who were intelligent, capable, and promising. They were brought into the royal court and placed under a program of education and training.

They were taught the language, literature, and learning of the Chaldeans. But this was about more than simply learning a new language or acquiring academic knowledge. Babylon wanted to reshape these young men.

Their names were changed. Their environment was changed. Their education was changed. They were being prepared to serve the Babylonian kingdom. The objective was assimilation.

Babylon understood something that we sometimes overlook: If you want to influence the future, invest in the minds of the young.

There is a real battle taking place over the hearts and minds of our children. Much of that battle happens through the ideas they are exposed to and the education they receive.

Education is never simply about transferring information. It also shapes values, assumptions, worldviews, and character.

This does not mean that every subject taught outside a Christian environment is harmful or that Christians should reject learning. Daniel himself became highly educated in Babylon and demonstrated remarkable wisdom.

But notice something important: Daniel resolved in his heart that he would remain faithful to God even while living in Babylon. He learned the language and knowledge of the Chaldeans, but he did not surrender his convictions.

That is the challenge before us. We must prepare our children to understand the world without allowing the world to determine their values.

We should be intentional about who teaches them, what ideas shape them, and what foundation they are building their lives upon. Hezekiah's folly had consequences that reached into the lives of children who had not yet been born.

Let us not make the same mistake by neglecting the spiritual preparation of our own children.

Prayer Father, thank You for the children and young people You have entrusted to us. Give us wisdom and discernment as we guide their education and spiritual development. Help us teach them to think carefully, recognize deception, and remain faithful to Your Word. May they be like Daniel, able to live in the world without surrendering their loyalty to You. Amen.

Further Study Additional Bible Reading

• Daniel 1:1–8 – The captivity and education of Daniel.

• Daniel 1:17–21 – God gives wisdom to the young men.

• Deuteronomy 6:4–9 – The responsibility of parents to teach God’s Word.

• Proverbs 22:6 – Training up a child.

• Romans 12:2 – Resisting the patterns of this world.

• 2 Timothy 3:14–17 – Continuing in the Scriptures.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Babylon place such importance on educating and training the young captives?

2. How can parents and communities prepare children to engage with the world without adopting its values?

3. What can we learn from Daniel about remaining faithful to God while living in an environment that does not share our convictions?

FRIDAY

God Gives Comfort Before We Need It

Isaiah 40:1–3 (KJV) Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Devotional There is a heartbreaking statement at the end of Hezekiah's story. After Isaiah told him that his descendants would be carried away to Babylon, Hezekiah responded:

“Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.” (Isaiah 39:8).

In other words, at least it wouldn't happen during his lifetime. What a tragic perspective. He was willing to accept that future generations would suffer, as long as he personally experienced peace.

But the story does not end with Hezekiah's failure. The next chapter of Isaiah opens with one of the most beautiful messages of comfort in Scripture.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

Notice the timing. God was providing a message of hope for His people before they would experience the full weight of Babylonian captivity. He knew what was coming, and He had already prepared words of comfort for them.

This reveals something wonderful about the character of God. He sees the future. He knows the trials His people will face. And He provides hope even before they realize how desperately they will need it.

Isaiah 40 was first a message of comfort and restoration for God's people in exile. Jerusalem would not remain desolate forever. God would bring His people back. And He did.

Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon and later issued the decree allowing the Jewish exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

But the prophecy reaches even further. The language of Isaiah 40 is taken up in the New Testament and connected to the ministry of John the Baptist. The voice crying in the wilderness would prepare the way for the coming Messiah.

The ultimate restoration God was preparing was not simply the return of an earthly nation to its former political condition. It was the coming of the King who would establish His kingdom in the hearts of men.

This is the hope we have today. Even when the world seems broken, even when the consequences of human rebellion are overwhelming, God's promises remain. He has not abandoned His people. And He is still preparing hearts for the coming King.

Prayer Father, thank You that Your plans and promises are greater than our failures. Thank You for providing hope even before we recognize how much we need it. When we face difficult times, remind us that You are faithful and that Your kingdom will ultimately be established. Help us trust Your promises and share Your message of comfort with those who are discouraged. Amen.

Further Study Additional Bible Reading

• Isaiah 39:5–8 – The prophecy of captivity.

• Isaiah 40:1–11 – Comfort and restoration for God’s people.

• Jeremiah 29:10–14 – God’s promise to bring His people back.

• Ezra 1:1–4 – Cyrus and the return from captivity.

• Romans 15:4–13 – The encouragement and hope of Scripture.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Isaiah 40 teach us about God’s awareness of our future struggles?

2. Why is it important to remember God’s promises when we are experiencing the consequences of our own decisions?

3. How can we become people who offer biblical comfort and hope to those who are spiritually discouraged?

SATURDAY

Make Straight the Highway

Isaiah 40:3–5 (KJV) The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Devotional Isaiah's prophecy of comfort contains a remarkable promise. A voice would cry in the wilderness, calling people to prepare the way of the Lord.

In ancient times, when a king was coming, preparations would be made for his arrival. Roads would be cleared, obstacles removed, and pathways made ready. Isaiah uses that picture to describe the preparation necessary for the coming of the Lord.

Centuries later, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching this very message. Matthew 3:1–3 identifies John as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

His message was simple: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2).

John was preparing people to receive their King. But how did he prepare the way? By calling people to repentance.

He confronted sin, exposed hypocrisy, and challenged people to examine their hearts. He called them to turn away from wickedness and prepare themselves for the coming Messiah.

John also fulfilled the role of an Elijah-like messenger. Malachi 4:5–6 foretold the coming of Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Jesus identified John as the Elijah figure who had come in the spirit and power of that prophecy (Matthew 11:13–14; Luke 1:17).

Yet the call to prepare the way does not end with John. The message of repentance, restoration, and preparation remains relevant as we look toward the second coming of Christ.

God's people are called to be a voice in the wilderness, calling men and women back to the truth. We should be a people who encourage others to examine their hearts, turn from unrighteousness, and prepare for the coming King.

But there is something especially important in the final verse of Isaiah's prophecy: “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed.”

This has been God's desire from the beginning. He wants His glory to be revealed. But here is where we must return to the story of Hezekiah.

Like proud children, we often want to engage in our own spiritual show and tell. We want others to see our accomplishments, our knowledge, our influence, and our spiritual treasures. We want the glory.

But the call of God is for us to prepare the way for His glory to be revealed, not ours.

The crooked paths must be made straight in our own hearts. The mountains of pride must be brought low. The valleys of discouragement must be lifted. The rough places of our character must be made plain.

We must allow God to do His work within us so that the character of Christ can be revealed through us. The King is coming. May we be a people who are ready to receive Him.

Prayer Heavenly Father, prepare my heart for the coming of Your Son. Expose the pride, selfishness, and unrighteousness that stand in the way of Your work in my life. Help me become a faithful voice calling others to repentance and pointing them toward Christ. Let the crooked places in my character be made straight, and let Your glory be revealed through my life. May I never seek the glory that belongs to You alone. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

Further Study

Additional Bible Reading

• Isaiah 40:1–11 – The coming of the Lord and the revelation of His glory.

• Matthew 3:1–12 – John the Baptist prepares the way.

• Malachi 4:4–6 – The promise of Elijah’s coming.

• Luke 1:13–17 – John comes in the spirit and power of Elijah.

• Matthew 11:7–15 – Jesus identifies John as the promised messenger.

• 2 Peter 3:10–14 – Preparing for the coming day of the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to prepare the way of the Lord in our own hearts?

2. How can we become a modern-day voice calling people to repentance without becoming self-righteous or judgmental?

3. What are some areas of pride, selfishness, or unrighteousness that God may need to make straight in our lives before Christ returns?

SABBATH REFLECTION

Whose Glory Are We Revealing?

As we conclude this week, we have followed the story of Hezekiah from his remarkable spiritual victories to one of the greatest mistakes of his life.

Hezekiah was a good king who experienced extraordinary deliverance from God. But when Babylon came with letters and gifts, he became flattered by their attention and showed them everything he possessed.

His desire to impress a foreign power opened the door to consequences that would affect generations. The treasures of his fathers would be carried away. His descendants would become captives. The children of Judah would be taken to Babylon and subjected to a foreign system of education and influence.

But God did not abandon His people. Through Isaiah, He gave them a message of comfort and restoration before they ever experienced the fullness of their captivity.

And in that message, we find a prophecy that points beyond the restoration of Jerusalem to the coming of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist would become the voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for the King. His message was repentance. And that remains the message God's people need today.

We live in a world filled with competing voices, competing kingdoms, and competing ideas. There is a real battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation.

We must be faithful in warning others, teaching our children, preserving the truth, and calling people back to God. But we must also examine our own hearts.

Are we like Hezekiah, eager to show others what we have accomplished? Are we more concerned with our own reputation than with revealing God's glory?

The greatest purpose of our lives is not to impress the world with what we have. It is to allow the character of Christ to be revealed through us.

Isaiah's prophecy ends with these words: “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”

That is the ultimate hope. The King is coming, and His glory will be revealed.

May the mountains of pride be brought low, the valleys of discouragement be lifted, and the crooked paths in our hearts be made straight. Let us prepare the way for the King.

Closing Scripture · John 1:23 (KJV) He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

A Final Sabbath Prayer Our Father in Heaven, thank You for the lessons we can learn from the life of Hezekiah. Help us recognize the dangers of pride, flattery, and the desire for recognition. Teach us to value the spiritual inheritance You have entrusted to us and to faithfully pass it along to the next generation. Give us wisdom to recognize the influences of Babylon and courage to remain faithful to Your Word. As we look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, prepare our hearts. Bring down the mountains of pride, lift up the valleys of discouragement, and make the crooked places straight. May our lives reveal Your glory rather than our own. Help us become faithful voices calling others to repentance and pointing them toward the coming King. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.