

CHAPTER 32

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the reign of Hezekiah.

I. The descent which Sennacherib made upon him, and the care he took to fortify himself, his city, and the minds of his people, against that enemy (v. 1-8).

II. The insolent blasphemous letters and messages which Sennacherib sent him (v. 9-19).

III. The real answer God gave to Sennacherib's blasphemies, and to Hezekiah's prayers, in the total rout of the Assyrian army, to the shame of Sennacherib and the honour of Hezekiah (v. 20-23).

IV. Hezekiah's sickness and his recovery from that, his sin and his recovery from that, with the honours that attended him living and dead (v. 24-33).

2 CHRONICLES 32:1-8

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION

Here is,

I. The formidable design of Sennacherib against Hezekiah's kingdom, and the vigorous attempt he made upon it. This Sennacherib was now, as Nebuchadnezzar was afterwards, the terror and scourge and great oppressor of that part of the world. He aimed to raise a boundless monarchy for himself upon the ruins of all his neighbours. His predecessor Shalmaneser had lately made himself master of the kingdom of Israel, and carried the ten tribes captives. Sennacherib thought, in like manner, to win Judah for himself. Pride and ambition put men upon grasping at universal dominion. It is observable that, just about this time, Rome, a city which afterwards came to reign more than any other had done *over the kings of the earth*, was built by Romulus. Sennacherib invaded Judah immediately after the reformation of it and the re-establishment of religion in it: *After these things he entered into Judah*, v. 1.

1. It was well ordered by the divine Providence that he did not give them this disturbance before the reformation was finished and established, as it might then have put a stop to it.
2. Perhaps he intended to chastise Hezekiah for destroying that idolatry to which he himself was devoted. He looked upon Hezekiah as profane in what he had done, and as having thrown himself out of the divine protection. He accordingly considered him as one who might easily be made a prey of.
3. God ordered it at this time that he might have an opportunity of showing himself strong on the behalf of this returning reforming people. He brought this trouble upon them that he might have the honour, and might put on them the honour, of their deliverance. *After these things, and the establishment thereof*, one would have expected to hear of nothing but perfect peace, and that none durst meddle with a people thus qualified for the divine favour; yet the next news we hear is that a threatening destroying army enters the country, and is ready to lay all waste. We may be in the way of our duty and yet meet with trouble and danger. God orders it so for the trial of our confidence in him and the manifestation of his care concerning us. The little opposition which Sennacherib met with in entering Judah induced him to imagine that all was his own. He thought to *win all the fenced cities* (v. 1), and purposed to *fight against Jerusalem*, v. 2. See ^{<1281E>}2 Kings 18:7, 13.

II. The preparation which Hezekiah prudently made against this storm that threatened him: *He took counsel with his princes* what he should do, what measures he should take, v. 3. With their advice he provided,

1. That the country should give him a cold reception, for he took care that he should find no water in it (and then his army must perish for thirst), or at least that there should be a scarcity of water, by which his army would be weakened and unfitted for service. A powerful army, if it want water but a few days, will be but a heap of dry dust. All hands were set immediately to work to *stop up the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land*, turning that (it is probable) into the city by pipes under-ground. Such as this is the policy commonly practised now-a-days of destroying the forage before an invading army.
2. That the city should give him a warm reception. In order to this he repaired the wall, raised towers, and made darts (or, as it is in the margin,

swords or weapons) and shields in abundance (v. 5), and appointed captains, v. 6. Note, Those that trust God with their safety must yet use proper means for their safety, otherwise they tempt him, and do not trust him. *God will provide*, but so must we also.

III. The encouragement which he gave to his people to depend upon God in this distress. He gathered them together in a broad open street, and *spoke comfortably to them*, v. 6. He was himself undaunted, being confident the invasion would issue well. He was not like his father, who had much guilt to terrify him and no faith to encourage him, so that, in a time of public danger, *his heart was moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*, and then no marvel that *the heart of his people was so too*, ^{<2300>}Isaiah 7:2. With what he said he put life into his people, his captains especially, and *spoke to their heart*, as the word is.

1. He endeavoured to keep down their fears: “*Be strong and courageous; do not think of surrendering the city or capitulating, but resolve to hold it out to the last man; do not think of losing the city, nor of falling into the enemy's hand; there is no danger. Let the soldiers be bold and brave, make good their posts, stand to their arms, and fight manfully, and let the citizens encourage them to do so: Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria.*” The prophet had thus encouraged them from God (^{<2300>}Isaiah 10:24): *Be not afraid of the Assyrians*; and here the king from him. Now it was that *the sinners in Zion were afraid* (^{<2304>}Isaiah 33:14), but the righteous *dwelt on high* (^{<2305>}Isaiah 33:15, 16) and *meditated on terror* so as to conquer it. See ^{<2308>}Isaiah 33:18, which refers to what is recorded here.

2. He endeavoured to keep up their faith, in order to the silencing and suppressing of their fears. “Sennacherib has a *multitude with him*, and yet there are *more with us than with him*; for we have God with us, and how many do you reckon him for? With our enemy is an arm of flesh, which he trusts to; but *with us is the Lord*, whose power is irresistible, our God, whose promise is inviolable, a God in covenant with us, *to help us, and to fight our battles*, not only to help us to fight them, but to fight them for us if he please:” and so he did here. Note, A believing confidence in God will raise us above the prevailing fear of man. He that *feareth the fury of the oppressor forgetteth the Lord his Maker*, ^{<2312>}Isaiah 51:12, 13. It is probable that Hezekiah said more to this purport, and that the people rested themselves upon what he said, not merely upon his word, but on the

things he said concerning the presence of God with them and his power to relieve them, the belief of which made them easy. Let the good subjects and soldiers of Jesus Christ rest thus upon his word, and boldly say, *Since God is for us, who can be against us?*

<4319> 2 CHRONICLES 32:9-23

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ASSYRIANS

This story of the rage and blasphemy of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's prayer, and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the destruction of the Assyrian army, we had more at large in the book of Kings, 2 Kings 18 and 19. It is contracted here, yet large enough to show these three things: —

I. The impiety and malice of the church's enemies. Sennacherib has his hands full in besieging Lachish (v. 9), but hears that Hezekiah is fortifying Jerusalem and encouraging his people to stand it out; and therefore, before he come in person to besiege it, he sends messengers to make speeches, and he himself writes letters to frighten Hezekiah and his people into a surrender of the city. See,

1. His great malice against the king of Judah, in endeavouring to withdraw his subjects from their allegiance to him. He did not treat with Hezekiah as a man of honour would have done, nor propose fair terms to him, but used mean and base artifices, unbecoming a crowned head, to terrify the common people and persuade them to desert him. he represented Hezekiah as one who designed to deceive his subjects into their ruin and betray them *to famine and thirst* (v. 11), as one who had done them great wrong and exposed them already to the divine displeasure by taking away the high places and altars (v. 12), and who, against the common interest of his people, held out against a force that would certainly be their ruin, v. 15.

2. His great impiety against the God of Israel, *the God of Jerusalem* he is called (v. 19), because that was the place he had chosen to put his name there, and because that was the place which was now threatened by the enemy and which the divine Providence had under its special protection. This proud blasphemer compared the great Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, with the dunghill gods of the nations, the work of men's hands, and thought him no more able to deliver his worshippers than they were to

deliver theirs (v. 19), as if an infinite and eternal Spirit had no more wisdom and power than a stone or the stock of a tree. He boasted of his triumphs over the gods of the nations, that they could none of them protect their people (v. 13-15), and thence inferred not only, *How shall your God deliver you?* (v. 14), but, as if he were inferior to them all, *How much less shall your God deliver you?* as if he were less able to help than any of them. Thus did they rail, rail in writing (which, being more deliberate, is so much the worse), *on the Lord God of Israel*, as if he were a cipher and an empty name, like all the rest, v. 17. Sennacherib, in the instructions he gave, said more than enough; but, as if his blasphemies had been too little, his servants, who learned insolence from their master, spoke yet more than he bade them *against the Lord God and his servant Hezekiah*, v. 16. And God resents what is said against his servants, and will reckon for it, as well as what is said against himself. All this was intended to frighten the people from their hope in God, which David's enemies sought to take him off from (^{4910b}Psalm 11:1; 42:10), saying, *There is no help for him in God*, (^{498D}Psalm 3:2; 71:11). Thus they hoped to take the city by weakening the hands of those that should defend it. Satan, in his temptations, aims to destroy our faith in God's all-sufficiency, knowing that he shall gain his point if he can do that; as we keep our ground if our *faith fail not*, (⁴²⁷³Luke 22:32).

II. The duty as well as the interest of the church's friends, and that is in the day of distress to pray and cry to Heaven. So Hezekiah did, and the prophet Isaiah, v. 20. It was a happy time when the king and the prophet joined thus in prayer. Is any troubled? Is any terrified? Let him pray. So we engage God for us; so we encourage ourselves in him. Praying to God is here called *crying to Heaven*, because we are, in prayer, to eye him as our Father in heaven, whence he beholds the children of men, and where he has prepared his throne.

III. The power and goodness of the church's God. He is able both to control his enemies, be they ever so high, and to relieve his friends, be they ever so low.

1. As the blasphemies of his enemies engage him against them (⁴⁸²⁷Deuteronomy 32:27), so the prayers of his people engage him for them. They did so here.

(1.) The army of the Assyrians was cut off by the sword of an angel, which triumphed particularly in the slaughter of the mighty men of valour, and the

leaders and captains, who defied the sword of any man. God delights to abase the proud and secure. The Targum says, The Word of the Lord (the eternal Word) sent Gabriel to do this execution, and that it was done with lightning, and in the passover night: that was the night in which the angel destroyed the first-born of Egypt. But that was not all.

(2.) The king of the Assyrians, having received this disgrace, was cut off by the sword of his own sons. Those that *came forth of his own bowels slew him*, v. 21. Thus was he mortified first, and then murdered — shamed first, and then slain. Evil pursues sinners; and, when they escape one mischief, they run upon another unseen.

2. By this work of wonder,

(1.) God was glorified, as the protector of his people. Thus he saved Jerusalem, not only from the hand of Sennacherib, but from the hand of *all others*, v. 22; for such a deliverance as this was an earnest of much mercy in store; and he *guided them*, that is, he guarded them, on every side. God defends his people by directing them, shows them what they should do, and so saves them from what is designed or done against them. For this *many brought gifts unto the Lord*, when they saw the great power of God in the defence of his people. Strangers were thereby induced to supplicate his favour and enemies to deprecate his wrath, and both brought gifts to his temple, in token of their care and desire.

(2.) Hezekiah was magnified as the favourite and particular care of Heaven. Many *brought presents to him* (v. 22, 23), in token of the honour they had for him, and to make an interest in him. By the favour of God enemies are lost and friends gained.

2 CHRONICLES 32:24-33

THE DEATH OF HEZEKIAH

Here we conclude the story of Hezekiah with an account of three things concerning him: —

I. His sickness and his recovery from it, v. 24. The account of his sickness is but briefly mentioned here; we had a large narrative of it, 2 Kings 20. His disease seemed likely to be mortal. In the extremity of it he prayed. God

answered him, and gave him a sign that he should recover, the going back of the sun ten degrees.

II. His sin and his repentance for it, which were also more largely related, ~~2~~2 Kings 20:12, etc. Yet several things are here observed concerning his sin which we had not there.

1. The occasion of it was the king of Babylon's sending an honourable embassy to him to congratulate him on his recovery. But here it is added that they came to enquire of *the wonder that was done in the land* (v. 31), either the destruction of the Assyrian army or the going back of the sun. The Assyrians were their enemies; they came to enquire concerning their fall, that they might triumph in it. The sun was their god; they came to enquire concerning the favour he had shown to Hezekiah, that they might honour him whom their god honoured, v. 31. These miracles were wrought to alarm and awaken a stupid careless world, and turn them from dumb and lame idols to the living God; and men were startled by them, but not converted till a greater wonder was done in that land, in the appearing of Jesus Christ, ~~4111~~Matthew 2:1, 2.

2. God left him to himself in it, to try him, v. 31. God, by the power of his almighty grace, could have prevented the sin; but he permitted it for wise and holy ends, that, by this trial and his weakness in it, he might know, that is, it might be known (a usual Hebraism), what was in his heart, that he was not so perfect in grace as he thought he was, but had his follies and infirmities as other men. God left him to himself to be proud of his wealth, to keep him from being proud of his holiness. It is good for us to know ourselves, and our own weakness and sinfulness, that we may not be conceited or self-confident, but may always think meanly of ourselves and live in a dependence upon divine grace. We know not the corruption of our own hearts, nor what we shall do if God leave us to ourselves. *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

3. His sin was the *his heart was lifted up*, v. 25. He was proud of the honour God had put upon him in so many instances, the honour his neighbours did him in bringing him presents, and now that the king of Babylon should send an embassy to him to caress and court him: this exalted him above measure. When Hezekiah had destroyed other idolatries he began to idolize himself. O what need have great men, and good men, and useful men, to study their own infirmities and follies, and their

obligations to free grace, that they may never think highly of themselves, and to beg earnestly of God that he will hide pride from them and always keep them humble!

4. The aggravation of his sin was that he made so bad a return to God for his favours to him, making even those favours the food and fuel of his pride (v. 25): *He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.* Note, It is justly expected that those who have received mercy from God should study to make some suitable returns for the mercies they have received; and, if they do not, their ingratitude will certainly be charged upon them. Though we cannot render an equivalent, or the payment of a debt, we must render the acknowledgment of a favour. *What shall I render that may be so accepted?* ^{<BB12>}Psalm 116:12.

5. The divine displeasure he was under for this sin; though it was but a heart-sin, and the overt-act seemed not only innocent but civil (the showing of his treasures to a friend), yet wrath came upon him and his kingdom for it, v. 25. Note, Pride is a sin that God hates as much as any, and particularly in his own people. Those that exalt themselves must expect to be abased, and put under humbling providences. Wrath came on David for his pride in numbering the people.

6. His repentance for this sin: *He humbled himself for the pride of his heart.* Note,

(1.) Though God may, for wise and holy ends, suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it; they *shall not be utterly cast down.*

(2.) Heart-sins are to be repented of, though they go no further.

(3.) Self-humiliation is a necessary branch of repentance.

(4.) Pride of heart, by which we have lifted up ourselves, is a sin for which we ought in a special manner to humble ourselves.

(5.) People ought to mourn for the sins of their rulers. The inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves with Hezekiah, because they either knew that they also had been guilty of the same sin, or at least feared that they might share in the punishment. When David, in his pride, numbered the people, they all smarted for his sin.

7. The reprieve granted thereupon. The wrath came not in his days. While he lived the country had peace and truth prevailed; so much does repentance avail to put by, or at least to put off, the tokens of God's anger.

III. Here is the honour done to Hezekiah, 1. By the providence of God while he lived. He had *exceeding much riches and honour* (v. 27), replenished his stores, victualled his campus, fortified his city, and did all he wished to do; for God *had given him very much substance*, v. 29. Among his great performances, his turning the water-course of Gihon is mentioned (v. 30), which was done upon occasion of Sennacherib's invasion, v. 3, 4. The water had come into that which is called the *old pool* (^{<2321>}Isaiah 22:11) and the *upper pool* (^{<2371>}Isaiah 7:3); but he gathered the waters into a new place, for the greater convenience of the city, called the *lower pool*, ^{<2321>}Isaiah 22:9. And, in general, he *prospered in all his works*, for they were good works.

2. By the respect paid to his memory when he was dead.

(1.) The prophet Isaiah wrote his life and reign (v. 32), his acts and his goodness or piety, or which it is part of the honour to be recorded and remembered, for examples to others.

(2.) The people *did him honour at his death* (v. 33), buried him in the chief of the sepulchres, made as great a burning for him as for Asa, or, which is a much greater honour, made great lamentation for him, as for Josiah. See how the honour of serious godliness is manifested in the consciences of men. Though it is to be feared that the generality of the people did not heartily comply with the reforming kings, yet they could not but praise their endeavours for reformation, and the memory of those kings was blessed among them. It is a debt we owe to those who have been eminently useful in their day to do them honour at their death, when they are out of the reach of flattery and we have seen the end of their conversation. The due payment of this debt will be an encouragement to others to do likewise.