

When Stress Steals Your Strength



“They told him [Isaiah], ‘This is what King Hezekiah says: Today is a day of trouble, insults, and disgrace. It is like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to deliver the baby.’” Isaiah 37:3 NLT

- ▶ When have you been so stressed and overwhelmed with problems that you felt like you had no strength to deal with it?

Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe writes that former U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger once told the *New York Times*, “There could not be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full.”

King Hezekiah was facing a paralyzing crisis, as indicated in the key verse, Isaiah 37:3, *“...It is like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to deliver the baby.”* Stress stole Hezekiah’s strength. This was due to two crises: (1) Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem, was under siege by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria (Isaiah 37), and (2) Hezekiah was deathly ill and had a short time to live (Isaiah 38:1).

The two stories of chapters 37 and 38 are *not* in chronological order but in thematic order. Isaiah separated the stories to give full attention to the details of each incident. However, Hezekiah was dealing with two issues *simultaneously*—an international crisis (Assyrian invasion) and a personal crisis (a deadly sickness). Evidence of this is that the Assyrian invasion ended in chapter 37:36-38 but Judah’s rescue is promised in the next chapter, Isaiah 38:6.

At times, we, too, face stressful life problems that steal our strength. What can we learn from Hezekiah about dealing with overwhelming stress? How did he find the strength to face his problems?

Central Lesson:
The LORD Is Our Source of Strength—Seek Him, Trust Him!

Personal Application

1. **PRAY** and Seek God’s Help and Favor (37:14-21; 38:1-8).

“¹⁴ After Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it, he went up to the Lord’s Temple and spread it out before the Lord. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the Lord...” (37:14-15).

“¹ About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: ‘This is what the Lord says: “Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.”’ ² When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord” (38:2).

Prayer is a central theme of Isaiah 37-38. Hezekiah’s first response to his crisis was to pray for God’s help. He could have looked first to the generals of Judah’s troops for help or political allies of other nations. But he sought the Lord. When we don’t know what to do when facing a crisis, remember that our first response should be to pray and seek God’s help and favor.

2. Have **FAITH & Trust in the LORD** (37:1, 18-20).

“¹ When King Hezekiah heard their report, he tore his clothes and put on burlap and went into the Temple of the Lord.”

Hezekiah believed that God was the only true God. He could rescue Judah from the Assyrians. He sought God’s help and had faith God would help. We, too, must have faith and trust in God’s care for us in difficult times.

3. Seek Godly **ADVICE** (37:2-4).

“² And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and the leading priests, all dressed in burlap, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.”

Hezekiah not only prayed for God’s help but also sought advice and guidance from Isaiah, God’s man. We, too, should seek godly advice from people we trust and who walk with the Lord when facing difficult decisions.

4. Be **PATIENT** with God’s Timing and Response—sometimes God responds immediately and other times it is later (37:36-37).

“³⁶ That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. ³⁷ Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there.”

Who is the angel of the Lord? He is not identified even though he appears in the Old Testament many times. However, there are several clues to his identity. (1) In the Hebrew text, only this angel is referred to with the article “the” as in “the” angel of the Lord. (2) Often, “the” angel of the Lord speaks as God, is referred to as God, and acts as God. (3) Those who saw the angel of the Lord feared for their lives because they had “seen God” and still lived (Judges 13:22). (4) The appearance of the angel of the Lord ceases after the incarnation of Christ. (5) Plus, the word “angel” means “messenger” and is used for humans and heavenly beings. Therefore, Bible scholars are convinced that “the angel of the Lord” is the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, in his pre-incarnate state. They refer to this as a “theophany,” an appearance of God the Son in physical form. In short, Jesus, in his pre-incarnate form, rescued Hezekiah and Judah from the Assyrians by walking into the camp and taking out 185,000 of their soldiers! This same Jesus helps us today!

5. **SELF-care**—rest, eat right, exercise, take your medications (doctor prescribed), maintain mental health, do something recreational, etc (38:9-21).

“⁹ When King Hezekiah was well again, he wrote this poem...”

“²¹ Isaiah had said to Hezekiah’s servants, “Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil, and Hezekiah will recover.”

We are responsible for taking care of our physical and mental health, especially when facing high amounts of stress. This includes prescribed medications from our doctors (high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.). Both a miracle and medicine healed Hezekiah. God works through medicine, too.

Central Lesson:
The LORD is our source of strength—seek Him, trust Him!

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday’s study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.