

INTRODUCTION

What is in a name? Though I was not a business major in school I am quite interested in the study of marketing. In order for people to buy your products they need to remember your brand name. Let us study a few examples. Many people may know that IBM stands for the International Business Machines Corporation. For the sports cars fans among us do you know the full name for BMW? I would rather not show off my poor German. The three English letters represent Bavarian Motor Works. Those who like to eat spicy food must have tried the “Old Godmother” (老乾妈) chili-pepper sauce before. A Guizhou lady called Huabi Tao (陶华碧) created her own sauce for her cold noodle stall. People like it so much that some of them stopped by just to buy the condiment. Someone then suggested to Ms. Tao: “Since your chili sauce is so well-loved why don’t you commercialize it?” That is how she started her manufacturing shop in 1996. This illiterate lady not only owns a multi-million dollar business she is even elected as a representative for the National People’s Congress (人民代表大会). A brand name reminds people of the characteristics of its products. To Christians the most wonderful name in the universe is God. He is our Creator, Sustainer, Protector and Deliverer. In 2 Chronicles 32 king Hezekiah of Judah gained new understanding about God’s name when his country was under the threat from Assyria. Not only that the fate of his people but also God’s reputation were at stake.

The Bible praises Hezekiah because he was completely dedicated to God. Listen to how **2 Kings 18:5-7** describe him: **5** Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. **6** He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. **7** And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. The Bible tells us that Hezekiah did a lot of good things that pleased God. Hezekiah’s father king Ahaz bribed Assyria in order to keep peace with this great nation. Hezekiah trusted God on His protection rather than keeping the role as someone’s vassal. That explains why Assyria was trying to attack Judah. Besides, Hezekiah also initiated great spiritual reform in his country. He destroyed the idols set up by his father and other kings in the dynasty, he rebuilt the priesthood system, he reopened the temple for animal sacrifice and worship and for the first time in many years the Passover was observed. When all that had been completed **2 Chronicles 32:1** tells us - After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. We may expect that after Hezekiah finally steered his country back to God, God would bless Hezekiah with treasure, children, respect of nations surrounding Judah, peace and long life. But now Assyria was right at the backyard. We may share that feeling too. We pour out our hearts to serve in different ministries, go out to preach the gospel, read our Bible every day, pray for our brothers and sisters and offer money to support God’s work we expect God to bless us in return. We do not anticipate any misfortune to happen. Welcome to reality! It is not that God cannot shield us from any calamity. But God allows difficulty to come to us for His purpose. In the case of Hezekiah God wanted this Judah king to value what God valued the most. The same message is also for us, that God concerns about His own glory more than we can imagine. God manifests His glory through the way He handles our problem in life.

EXPLANATION

1. 我们不懈怠的準備 Preparation for Imminent Warfare

How did Hezekiah face the threat from Assyria? He motivated the whole nation to prepare for the imminent warfare. From verses 3 to 8 he did quite a few things. **Verse 3** says Hezekiah “consulted with his officials and military staff...” Hezekiah could not fight this battle alone, and so he gathered his assistants for advice. A major project they came up with is recorded in **verse 4**: They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land... Keep in mind that Judah is in the Middle East where water is scarce. Without water a battle cannot go on for too long. What they did was to plug the water sources from outside of the city and directed the water to an underground tunnel they dug to make it hard for the enemies to locate water. The channel was later discovered by an archaeologist in 1838. It was over 500 meters long. That is quite an engineering accomplishment in 700 BC! Besides gathering consultants and building an underground water tunnel according to **verse 5** Hezekiah also did other preparations: Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. He built another wall outside that one and reinforced the terraces of the City of David. He also made large numbers of weapons and shields. Hezekiah gave orders to repair the broken walls and towers, and he also build another layer of wall on the outskirts of the city. Besides, Hezekiah prepared more weapons and shields for the soldiers. After all those preparations were done Hezekiah also encouraged the people in **verses 7 and 8**: **7** “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. **8** With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said. What the Judah people needed was not only physical preparations they needed spiritual preparation all the more. Hezekiah pinpointed the core of the matter that the battle was not only between two nations. It was between Jehovah God who protected His people and the idols behind the Assyrian army. Hezekiah had no idea how God would help Judah win the battle. As a leader he did the best he could to prepare for the fight. There is no contradiction between our preparation and our faith in God’s help. Last year in one piano competition both of my sons did poorly. What agitated me was not the final results, but it was the fact that they did not put enough effort to prepare for the contest. They grumbled over how difficult the music was and they whined about the extra time spent on practice. So there they were making big and small mistakes in their presentation. They knew that they had messed up, and from my body language they understood that daddy was not quite happy about it. On our way back once everyone sat down in the car I turned around and said to them: “There is one thing I want you to keep in mind – even a genius needs practice. If you don’t spend time in practice you won’t get good result.” Indeed we know that we have to rely on the Lord to solve our problems. But that does not take away our responsibilities to prepare well. The students among us cannot go to an exam without reviewing the lessons. Before a job interview you should research the background of the company and prepare to answer the expected questions. When you have a major disease there is nothing wrong to consult the best specialists you can find. However, after all that preparation and consultation of expert advice our faith is in the Lord, not on technology, human experience or secular wisdom. It is God’s hand that works through the resources we can gather to help us solve our problems. God does not want to share His glory

with anything or anyone. Therefore, after the trouble is over not only that we have to thank the people who provided help we should give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness too.

2. 敌人不间断的攻击 Perpetration of Enemy's Snare

God concerns about His own glory more than we can imagine. In our difficulties God gives us wisdom to make preparation for the challenge we face. When we wait patiently for God's deliverance our spiritual enemy Satan would find ways to perpetrate our mind with his snare tactic. After the people of Judah finished preparing for the imminent warfare Assyria sent a threatening message to Hezekiah. When we compare 2 Chronicles 32 to the parallel passage in 2 Kings 18-19 it seems that the Assyrian army had two separate campaigns to attack Judah and two separate messages were sent to damage the morale of God's people. But no matter it is once or twice it was the same enemy that spread similar messages. The taunting words of the Assyrian king Sennacherib are recorded in verses 10-18. His message can be summarized by **verse 15**: Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my predecessors. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand! The message is two-fold: do not believe in Hezekiah and do not believe in God. Sennacherib explained that Hezekiah was being too naive that Judah could defeat the great nation of Assyria. He added that Hezekiah committed a big mistake for clearing out the idols the people had been depended on and requesting his people to worship Jehovah only. Secondly, Sennacherib recalled past history to prove that no other god could protect its people from being annihilated by Assyria. Therefore, neither could Jehovah spare Judah from the hand of the Assyrians. Doesn't that message sound too familiar? Some non-believers may say to you: "My gods cannot help me when I was in deep trouble. I don't think your God can do any good." You know, our spiritual enemy Satan has been telling lies since the beginning of human history. He tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit by lying in **Genesis 3:5** - "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan misled Eve into believing that God deliberately withheld some benefits not to share with her and Adam. Satan was essentially saying to Eve: "Trust me, don't trust God." Today Satan repeats the same lie in our ears. But to say that we put our trust in God does not mean that we can simply ignore the problems as if they did not exist. The power of the Assyrian army is real and their victory over other nations are facts. The more we understand our inability to overcome the challenge the more we would humbly depend on God. The bills are in and your account savings is getting low. Your immigration status will expire soon and there is no way to extend it. Based on statistics the curing rate for the disease you contract is low. We have to face the reality. However, while Satan wants us to focus on the problems God wants us to see His hands working behind the problems. Listen to Hezekiah's prayer in **2 Kings 19:17-19 - 17** "It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. **18** They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. **19** Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, LORD, are God." Hezekiah knew very clearly that the idols of the nations could not protect their people because they were not gods at all! In 2009 there was a major typhoon landed in Taiwan. I found this interesting picture on the internet. I hope that I would not offend our seeker friends who are Buddhist. The photo illustrates a Chinese saying that goes like: "A Buddha stature made of mud cannot protect itself against the river water." What Hezekiah prayed for was not only deliverance

from the enemy. But through the rescue God vindicated His own name that He is the only true God. Brothers and sisters: that should be the same prayer we utter before God. Whether it is physical illness, marital problem, crisis over our job or immigration status we do not only pray that God would deliver us from the problems. We also need to pray that God would prove Himself to be real to us and to the non-believing world.

3. 上帝不改变的眷顾 Perpetuation of God's Care

God concerns about His own glory more than we can imagine. When we face difficulties in life we have to make preparations and we have to stay on guard for the enemy's perpetration. Our God is faithful to His children. Through His deliverance He shows us the perpetuation of His care. How did God answer Hezekiah's plea for help? God prophesied through prophet Isaiah that He would still care for Judah. In **2 Kings 19:22** God responds to the insult of Assyria against Him this way: Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! Then God declares His judgment on the Assyrians in **verse 28**: Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came. The "hook" and "bit" refer to the humiliation the Assyrians treated their defeated enemies when they were dragged into exile as if they were animals. Assyria would be put to shame at its downfall. To Hezekiah God assures in **verse 32** that: Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it." Then skip to **verse 34**: I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant. God would protect Judah because He would not allow His name be smeared with mud and He would not forfeit His eternal covenant made through David. God would extend His perpetual care to His people. What then happened to the Assyrian army? **Verses 35 and 36** say: **35** That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning - there were all the dead bodies! **36** So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. God did not even need to use one soldier, a weapon or shield Hezekiah had prepared. The people of Judah did not have to rely on the newly built water tunnel to survive through a long battle. God took care of the 185,000 Assyrian warriors. And that is not the end. **Verse 37** continue to describe God's judgment on Sennacherib: One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king. There is no bigger irony that Sennacherib was assassinated in no other place but in the temple whose god he worshipped. The contrast is very evident – Sennacherib ridiculed about Jehovah while the deity he worshipped could not even protect his life against his own sons. God is eager to rise up for His people because He would not let His glory to go down the drain. God saved Judah from the hands of Assyria. Sadly, the spiritual reform Hezekiah initiated did not last too long. If you know the Old Testament history eventually Judah was demolished by another great nation – Babylon. God used exile as a means to discipline Judah because of her unfaithfulness to God. God concerns about His glory before the Gentile nations, but He also concerns about His glory in His people. God disciplines those whom He loves. But even in the tragedy of exile God continued to show His perpetual care to His people. Prophet Isaiah conveys a message of hope later in **Isaiah 54:10** that "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be

removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you. On the one hand God demands to reflect His glory through His children, but on the other hand God treats us with love and compassion. That is the kind of God on whom we can put our trust.

CONCLUSION

God concerns about His own glory more than we can imagine. He is ready to stand up to defend for His own name. God delights in those who uphold His glory. I began my sermon by introducing a few brand names. Let me also close with another well-known name-brand. Truett Cathy founded the Chick-fil-A exactly 60 years ago in Georgia. Mr. Cathy was a Southern Baptist who loved the Lord and his family. He understood very clearly his business exists “To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us.” The restaurant chain closes on Sunday so that its employees can spend time with their family members and they can attend church service if they want to. When the 1996 summer Olympics games were held in Atlanta, right where the Headquarter of Chick-fil-A is located, the restaurants still closed on Sunday. Throughout the years Chick-fil-A has been supporting some Christian organizations that uphold traditional family values. In 2012, some same-sex marriage activists proposed a boycott of the restaurant in reaction to several public statements against same-sex marriage made by one of Truett’s sons. In response, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, another devout Christian, initiated a Chick-fil-A appreciation day. More than 600,000 people showed their support on Facebook. As a result, on the average each Chick-fil-A restaurant gained 30 % more sales on Aug 1, 2012 than a typical Wednesday. Mr. Cathy died at the age of 93 in 2014. In his will he specified that his business can be sold to someone else, but it can never go public. Mr. Cathy was determined to preserve what he valued the most. He understood that his business exists for the glory of God. How much difference would it be if we truly realize that we exist for God's glory? It is God who permeates into our life to use us for the sake of His glory. Our joy is not only ours because we know that God rejoices with us. Our pain is not only ours because we know that God shares our pain too.