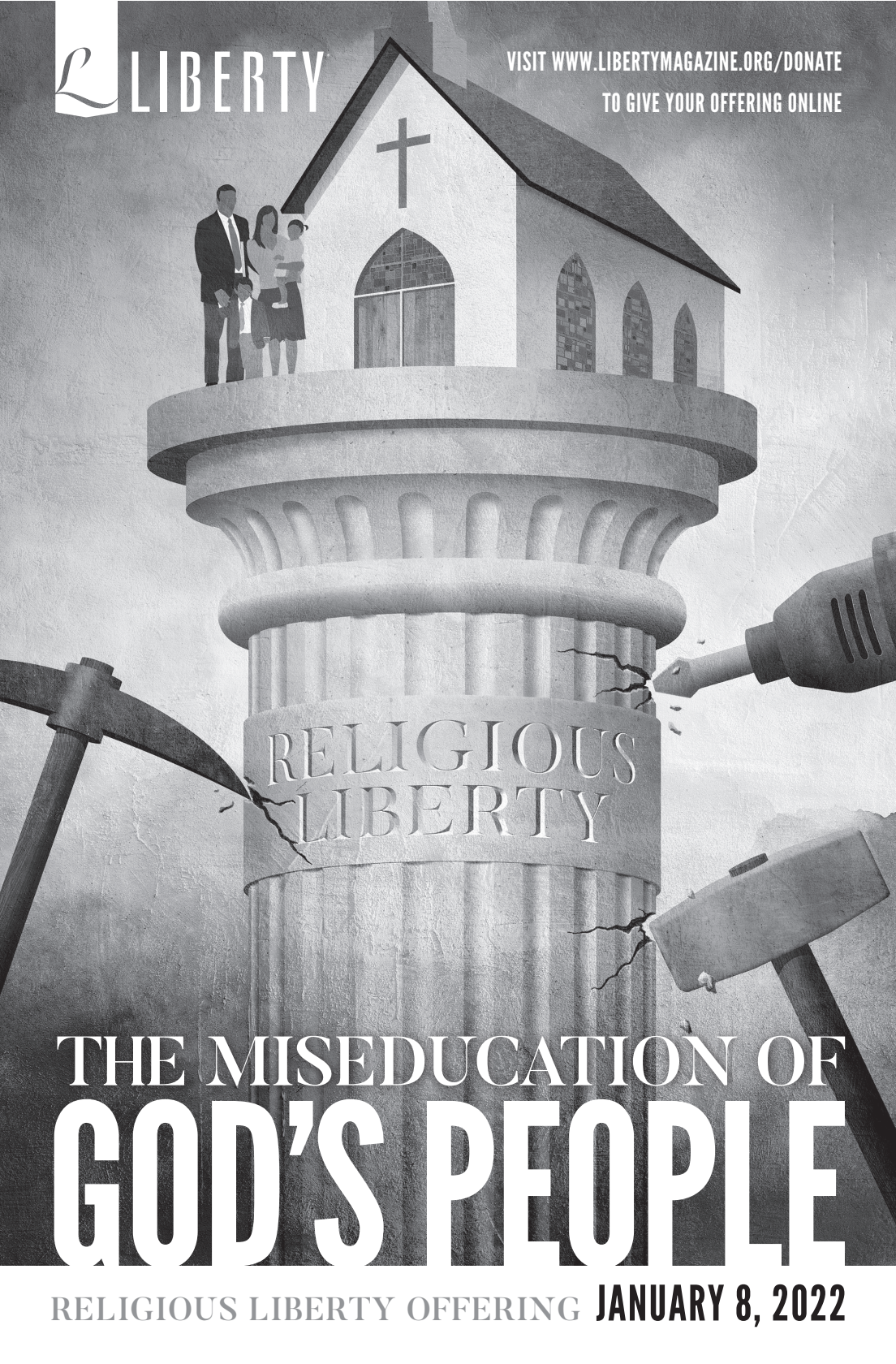


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# THE MISEDUCATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

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# THE MISEDUCATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

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Turn with me in your Bibles to a familiar story found in the second book of Kings, chapter 20, and verses 1-6. The Bible says:

“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.”’

“Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, ‘Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

“And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of

the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David' " " " (2 Kings 20:1-6, NKJV).\*

Through almost six decades of life I've come to realize that we serve a God who "sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45, NKJV). It doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, Republican or Democrat—we all live in one of the three continuums of life. We either are in a storm, just got out of a storm, or getting ready to go back into a storm again. And such was the story of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was someone who found himself in and out of storms on a regular basis, but he never lost sight of the fact that God, and God alone, was in control of his life.

The story of Hezekiah is a powerful one. It's a story of two separate prayers, interposed between two major problems. And to understand where Hezekiah was in chapter 20 of 2 Kings, we also need to understand what's going on in chapter 18. Here we see that Hezekiah was a remarkable king—in fact, after King David, he was probably the most righteous and faithful king that had ever reigned in Judah. He engaged in remarkable service for the Lord. He impacted his community as king in a tremendous way. In other words, he was probably a great representative of public affairs and religious liberty. Everyone who saw Hezekiah knew who his God was.

There were many turning points in Hezekiah's life where he could have gone astray, but God always put him right back where he needed to be. Hezekiah was continually reminded that victory comes only by staying connected

with God, by praying without ceasing. And through this connection Hezekiah guarded himself and Judah against the “miseducation of God’s people.”

In the story we’re looking at today, Hezekiah was facing immense pressure from the neighboring nation of Assyria. The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, had turned his military sights toward the strategically important kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah’s first response was to place his faith in God. He understood there would always be dangers that appeared overwhelming when seen from a purely human standpoint. But living in the will of God is about more than resting in His sovereignty. It’s also about wrestling with your own uncertainties, and accepting that God is God, all by Himself.

This is the first point I want to share with you today: You will not be miseducated if you understand who God is and recognize that He sees each one of us through the lens of eternity. He doesn’t see us as we are now. He doesn’t even see us as He hopes we will one day be. God sees us as we will be in the final analysis with Him.

When we’re standing at the beginning of our own life’s story, there’s one thing we can know for certain about the future—there will be times we’ll come up short with God. But we can be equally sure of something else—the grace of God will always be there and, even when we come up short, His eternal gaze will never leave us.

Now, Hezekiah was only 25 years old when he became king. I have a son of my own who’s 25 years old and I love him very much, but I certainly can’t imagine him



as a king, responsible for the well-being of a nation! But Hezekiah had even bigger problems. The foreign nations he was dealing with wanted to dictate what he should do. They wanted to exploit his lack of experience, and they told him, "We want Judah. We want you to turn your nation over to us."

When we're faced with a tough situation, do we always look to God? Why do people sometimes look the other way and find themselves following the devil? Well, the fact is that the devil has been doing his job for a very long time. His skills at persuasion are unmatched. Just think about it. While in heaven, Satan got one third of the heavenly host to walk away from a God whom they'd worshipped and whom they'd seen, face to face, every day. That's what you would call the miseducation of the angels. And then, when the devil comes to this world and encounters Eve, he begins her miseducation as well. He contradicts God's instructions and urges Eve to take the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He tells her, "You shall not surely die."

Are there times in our own lives when we allow ourselves to be miseducated? Do we sometimes allow our politics to shape our faith, instead of allowing our faith to shape our politics? At the very moment when we get confused and start thinking that church has something to do with our elected leaders, or that church has something to do with what we should be doing at the ballet box, then that becomes the miseducation of God's people.

Hezekiah realized he was in a tough situation. Hezekiah knew he had no place to turn but to God. And he

understood that unless his faith was strong and secure, he could not do what God had for him to do, and he would not be able to experience the power of God in his life.

My brothers and sisters, each of us has the ability to reach out to a God who is more powerful than anything we can imagine. Let us never lose sight of the fact that our God is an awesome God. Our God sees us through eternal eyes. Our God looks out for us no matter what Satan has said. I've been to the back of the book, and I know how the story ends: Jesus wins. The devil can cause all kinds of trouble. The devil can cause worries and fears. But when Jesus steps in, there's nothing that can slow him down. I like the way Daniel put it when he said, "Michael shall stand up" (Daniel 12:1, NKJV). When Michael stands up, there's no power on this earth nor is there any power in heaven that can sit Him back down. My brothers and sisters, there is power in knowing that through prayer, everything can be changed.

Look at the first prayer Hezekiah prayed. In this prayer he declared that God would be glorified in the defeat of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. He said, "Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone" (2 Kings 19:19, NKJV).

The Bible tells us what happens next. Sennacherib sent 185,000 soldiers down to attack Jerusalem, and the armies of Israel were outnumbered more than 100 to one. But the Bible says just one angel came down in short order and wiped out 185,000 trained soldiers;

soldiers who'd been confident they would take God's people down.

It doesn't matter what our obstacles look like. It doesn't matter what our circumstances may be. We serve a God who is able. And that is the next point I'd like to share today: we should never forget what God has done for us in the past. Sometimes we forget so quickly what God has done. The devil comes to us on a regular basis and give us the message that our God is not able. But prayer reminds us that we serve a God who is more powerful than anything that we can imagine.

The king of Assyria knew about the God of Hezekiah. He had even actually sent out messages to the people of Judah, telling them, "Oh, I know you have a God who says you have a land of milk and honey. But I've wiped out people who had gods before!" But in the end it was the Assyrian king himself who lost his life. His very own children rose up and killed him.

God is in charge. God will always be there for you. And sometimes the only thing He asks you to do is to pray, then to step back and to wait on your miracle. I'm just naive enough to believe that my God is so powerful that He's capable of performing a miracle every day in my life. And so each day I wake up and wonder what will be my miracle that day.

Returning to the story of Hezekiah: he had two problems, and he needed two prayers. His first prayer dealt with the army of Assyria. His second prayer addressed something completely different—a health condition. Not only was



Hezekiah sick, the Bible tells us, but he was sick to the point that the prophet told him, "Get your house in order; you are getting ready to die." I can't imagine what that must have felt like to the king. But he had enough faith to reach out to God and say, "Lord, I need more time. God, give me another opportunity." We serve a God who is so powerful that He will come to us in whatever form we need. If darkness comes over our life, Jesus comes in as the light of the world. When our body is sick and racked with pain, Jesus comes to us as the Great Physician. He has more medicine in the hem of His garment than all the drugstores in the world. When we have spiritual pain, we serve a God who is the balm in Gilead, who can heal our soul.

Even if the devil walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, I'm not worried, because I've got my own Lion. The book of Revelation calls Him the Lion of Judah. The laws of nature tell me it doesn't matter how many lions show up; only one lion gets to rule the pride, and it's my Lion king, Jesus. They call Him the alpha and the omega. They call Him the beginning and the end. He is in charge of it all. When God looks at my life, He sees no problem that's insurmountable. The miseducation of God's people is the belief that our God is not able. And the miseducation of God's people is also the idea that what happens on earth is actually what matters most.

My brothers and sisters, what we do here on earth is really focused on just one thing: the day we will finally see Jesus, face to face. It's not about political parties. It's not about who wants to be in charge. It doesn't

matter what presidential administration is in place. It's not even about the work we do in public affairs and religious liberty. We know, in the end, that we're not going to be able to change people's minds. But our job is still to remind people who our God is. Our job is to let people know we serve a God who's more powerful than anything and anyone. Our job is to let people know that "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36, NKJV). No president can truly set us free. No governor can set us free. No senator or representative can set us free. True freedom comes only through Jesus. And there's nothing else that really matters.

So here we have Hezekiah understanding that he has a second problem, the sickness that will soon lead to his death. But he prays to God, saying, "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight." And God responds by giving Hezekiah 15 more years of life.

Now Hezekiah can reflect on the destruction of Sennacherib and his army and be reminded of the power and faithfulness of God. God answered his prayers. God stepped in and not only granted Hezekiah 15 more years, but even granted Hezekiah something he did not specifically request—a successor. When Hezekiah was first getting ready to die, he had no heir. But at the end of the 15 years, when he finally died, Hezekiah had a 12-year-old son who would eventually be the king of Judah.

My brothers and sisters, if we follow our God, there will be no miseducation in our lives. And so the final point I

want to share with you in this: just because something is happening to you, it doesn't mean it's all about you.

You see, God puts certain tests in our life. I have a physical every year, but my doctor doesn't ever just look at me and say, "Hey, you look pretty good. See you again next year." No, he runs tests on me, because it's the results of those tests that determine how I'm really doing. The doctor needs to find out what's really going on inside of me before he can prescribe what might be necessary.

The miseducation of God's people is in this thought: *Because it's happening to me, it must be about me.* My brothers and sisters, it is never about us; it is always about Him. It's never about who I am; it's always about who I am with. If we can keep that thought in mind, it will save us a lot of confusion.

We may find ourselves worrying about who's in political power. You may have a problem with the Biden administration; that may just be your test. You may have had a problem with the Trump administration; that may have been your test. The bottom line is we can't let ourselves get caught up in the things of this world and start believing that what's happening here on this earth is more important than what God has for us in heaven.

The fact is that God has blessings in store for us. But those blessings require us to keep moving forward in His name. Sometimes it's not until we get to the other side of our tests that we will experience the blessing. Hezekiah had to wait for an angel to come down and deal with the army of Assyria. Hezekiah had to wait before he had a

son who would live to be king. Sometimes our blessing is waiting on the other side of our test, and therefore it's not about us—it's only about Him.

I love the fact that the Bible always lets me know that my latter days are always going to be better than my former days, that my freedom in life is not tied to anything but Jesus. I've worked in all kinds of political administrations. I've worked for Republicans. I've worked for Democrats. And I can tell you this: the primary concern of all those parties is whether they will be reelected. But the fact of the matter is that I'm called to serve the King of kings, and Lord of lords. I don't care what administration is in place; it cannot be my Lord. It cannot be my king. I serve a God who, as the songwriter said, "has the whole world in His hands." And so that's why I don't have to be miseducated.

The devil will throw all kinds of spears and bullets at us and anything he can use to take us down. But our God has promised to be our protector.

I love this country we call America. I'm someone who gets choked up when I hear the national anthem. I love putting my hand over my heart. I love hearing "God Bless America." But I know that the American dream is not the Christian dream. The American dream is about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But the Christian dream is about love, faith, and the pursuit of holiness. And those two dreams, in the end, are going to be in conflict. And when they come into conflict, I've got to make a choice. And either I'm going to make heaven my home, or I'm going to make this earth my home.



I grew up in New York, and I loved going to visit my father at the World Trade Center. He had an office on the 76th floor, and I used to go up to that office, look down onto the East River in New York Harbor, and see the Statue of Liberty. At the base of that statue there's some words written by a woman named Emma Lazarus that have signaled hope to many. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Those words sound so powerful. Those words sound so free.

But those words will never compete with "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3, NKJV). Now, that's biblical. Now, that's truth, and that will eventually make us free.

My brothers and sisters, it's time to put the miseducation of God's people on notice. For the devil to succeed at miseducation, he simply has to change our thinking. And the moment our thinking has changed, the devil has won, and he can just go ahead and leave us to ourselves.

But God wants us to understand that it's not about us, it's about Him. He wants to make sure that we don't forget what he has done for us in the past. And He

wants us to be secure in the knowledge that He sees us through eternal eyes.

Today I want to charge each one of you to go out and continue to do the work of the Lord; to go out and be impactful in your community; to do the work of public affairs and do religious liberty; to understand that there's no God-given job or assignment that's beneath your anointing. Whatever God calls you to do, do it to the best of your ability.

And no matter how tough things get, may we always remember that God is in charge and that, at the end of it all, we'll one day gather together with Him on that sea of glass.

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