

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 39

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 39

Theme: "The Painful Price for Showing Off!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 39:6 (KJV) "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."

INTRODUCTION

What makes a man want to show off? It is his pride. Hezekiah was such a man. It is sad that the extension of 15 years of his life resulted in a grievous act that brought about the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Many Jews were placed in captivity because of this incident. Isaiah 39 is an example of the severe consequences that can result from one's action.

This incident occurred soon after king Hezekiah was healed. The king of Babylon heard of his recovery and sent an envoy bearing gifts. The show of "concern" from a foreign king resulted in a serious blunder on the

part of Hezekiah. His "blunder" would bring about the demise of Judah because the king of Babylon was given a glimpse of the wealth of Judah.

Today many people, including teenagers, are experts at showing off. They have mastered the art through years of practice. For example, they may start with a subtle query of the other party's welfare and that of his loved ones. The hope is that the other party will ask the same question in return. This will give them the opportunity to blow their trumpet as loud as possible so that all can hear.

The desire to show-off is a common failing among the successful. Those who do not do well (for example bankrupts, convicts and the unemployed) have little to boast. In fact, they want to hide their inadequacies so as to retain whatever little dignity they have.

What are the biblical teachings on the subject of "showing off"? Is it a sin? If it is a sin, how serious is it?

OUTLINE

1. The Visit (vv.1-2);
2. The Consequence (vv. 3-8).

COMMENTARY

The Visit – 39:1-2

The visit originated from the son of the king of Babylon. His name was Me-ro'dach-bal'a-dan. He was the son of Bal'a-dan, the king of Babylon at the time. Who was Me-ro'dach-bal'a-dan? ISBE describes him as, ". . . a king of

the Chaldeans of the house of Yakin, and was the most dangerous and inveterate foe of Sargon and his son Sennacherib, kings of Assyria, with whom he long and bitterly contested the possession of Babylon and the surrounding provinces. Merodach-Baladan seemed to have seized Babylon immediately after the death of Shalmaneser in 721 BC; and it was not till the 12th year of his reign that Sargon succeeded in ousting him. From that time down to the 8th campaign of Sennacherib, Sargon and his son pursued with relentless animosity Merodach-Baladan and his family until at last his son Nabushumishkun was captured and the whole family of Merodach-Baladan was apparently destroyed. According to the monuments, therefore, it was from a worldly point of view good politics for Hezekiah and his western allies to come to an understanding with Merodach-Baladan and the Arameans, Elamites, and others, who were confederated with him. From a strategical point of view, the weakness of the allied powers consisted in the fact that the Arabian desert lay between the eastern and western members of the confederacy, so that the Assyrian kings were able to attack their enemies when they pleased and to defeat them in detail."

The superpower in that region was still the Assyrians. Their power might have waned after the deaths of 185,000 troops but they had not lost their superpower status. The Neo-Babylonia came into power around 625 BC. The Babylonian king was called Nabopolassar, the father of

Nebuchadnezzar. ISBE describes the conflict and history between the Assyrians up to the time of the rise of the neo-Babylon Empire, "During the time of Sennacherib, Merodach-baladan the Chaldean became a great obstacle to Assyria maintaining its supremacy over Babylonia. Three times he gained possession of Babylon, and twice had himself proclaimed king. For thirty years he plotted against Assyria. What is learned from the inscriptions concerning him furnishes an interesting commentary on the sending of the embassy, in 704 BC, to Hezekiah (2Kings 20:12; Isaiah 39:1) in order to induce him to revolt against Assyria, which he knew would help his own cause. Finally Sennacherib, in 690 BC, after he had experienced much trouble by the repeated uprisings of the Babylonians, and the aspirations of Merodach-baladan, endeavored to obliterate Babylon from the map. His son and successor Esarhaddon, however, tried to make Babylon again happy and prosperous. One of his first acts was to send back to Babylon the statue of Bel-Merodach. He rebuilt the city, and also restored other Babylonian temples, for instance, that of Enlil at Nippur. The Babylonians solemnly declared him king. Ashurbanipal, his son and successor, followed his policy. The evidence of his operations at Nippur is everywhere seen in the shape of stamped, kiln-dried bricks.

"Before Esarhaddon died, he had planned that Babylonia should become independent and be ruled by his son, Shamash-shum-ukin, while Assyria he handed down to

Ashurbanipal. But when the latter came to the throne, Assyria permitted the former only to be appointed viceroy of Babylon. It seems also that even some portions of Babylonia were ruled directly by Ashurbanipal.

"After 15 years Shamash-shum-ukin rebelled and attempted to establish his independence, but Sennacherib besieged Babylon and took it, when Shamash-shum-ukin destroyed himself. Kadalanu was then appointed viceroy, and ruled over part of the country. Nabopolassar was the last viceroy appointed by Assyria. At last the time had arrived for the Babylonians to come again unto their own. Nabopolassar who perhaps was a Chaldean by origin, made an alliance with the Umman Manda. This he strengthened by the marriage of his son Nebuchadrezzar to the daughter of Astyages, the king. Nineveh finally fell before the Umman Manda hordes, and was razed to the ground. This people took possession of Northern Assyria. The Armenian vassal states, and Southern Assyria, as well as the title to Palestine, Syria and Egypt, fell to Babylonia."

The reason given was that they had heard of king Hezekiah's illness and recovery. If king Hezekiah had already recovered, was there a need to send an envoy and a present? It was not for altruistic reasons. The Babylonians needed the help of the Jews and the Jews needed the help of the Babylonians to keep the Assyrians at bay. This was a strategic move that made very good military sense. Babylon was north of Assyria and Judah was South of Assyria. Together, the alliance of Babylon and Judah

would present a good pincer movement against the Assyrians if they were to try and attack either nation.

It was understandable for Babylon to make such a calculated military move but for king Hezekiah to accept and agree to it was sin. He was not like other gentile kings. He was the king of Judah, the people of God. Such a worldly alliance was an insult to the LORD. Joining forces with a heathen nation to protect her borders was as good as slapping God in the face. By such a move, king Hezekiah had declared implicitly that the LORD was not able or strong enough to protect Judah. Thus he needed to ask the followers of idolatrous gods to help the LORD! This was the message received even though this might not be the message intended by king Hezekiah!

What Hezekiah did was a let down. It was sad to see him commit such a grievous sin just after the LORD had extended his life.

Hezekiah was glad to see his visitors. The word "glad" means "to brighten up." Hezekiah was more than just happy. He brightened up! The visit of the Babylonian envoy filled him with importance. Just as the Queen of Sheba came to visit king Solomon, here a foreign king came to visit a Jewish king! To go to the home of another king is to show respect and honour to him.

The Bible recorded, "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." Why did Hezekiah show these Babylonian men all the wealth of the kingdom of Judah? The sense of importance he felt made him lightheaded. He wanted to show them that he was worthy to receive the honour bestowed on him. He opened all his treasuries to the eyes of the king of Babylon to tell him that he did the right thing in sending the envoy to see him!

Hezekiah's attempts to impress the king of Judah were sinful. As a spiritual king, he ought not to measure himself based upon carnal criteria. He should be measured in terms of faithfulness rather than the size of his treasuries. Hezekiah had changed for the worse within a short time of his recovery.

The Consequence – 39:3-8

The LORD sent Isaiah, His prophet, to rebuke king Hezekiah. Before Isaiah did so, he ascertained the truthfulness of the matter by using king Hezekiah's own words. Isaiah asked him what the men said and where they had come from. King Hezekiah replied to only the second question, "They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon." Why did king Hezekiah not divulge what the men had said? When someone is evasive, it is not a good sign. He usually has something to hide.

The third question was pointed and condemning. Isaiah asked king Hezekiah what he had showed to his

Babylon visitors. He answered, "All that *is* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them." Hezekiah was truthful for he confessed to what he had done. To show your riches to a foreign king, who might be a superpower later, would only invite trouble. It is like showing your treasures to a thief. He will bide his time and wait for the right time to rob your wealth!

The judgment declared by Isaiah was to the point, "Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: **6** 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. **7** 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." These words were from the LORD who had delivered him out of the hand of the Assyrians.

The day would surely come when all that were in king Hezekiah's house including all his wealth accumulated by his forefathers would be taken. His sons would be taken into captivity and made eunuchs. The word "eunuchs" does not necessarily mean castration in the service of the king. It may mean a minister of the state. Daniel and his three friends were part of the first group to be taken into Babylonian captivity. They were selected because of their perfection and good looks. It does not make sense that they would be castrated if

they were chosen for their perfection. Also Daniel was not placed in charge of the concubines of the king. He functioned as a counsellor to the king, giving him advice and interpreting his dreams.

The emphasis was that they would lose their freedom and become slaves in a foreign land. The action of king Hezekiah would seal the fate of the future generations. This did not mean that when the time come for the Jews to be exiled, the Jews of that generation did not commit sins worthy of exile. They did! The responsibility of man is not vitiated when the sovereignty of God comes into play.

Hezekiah's reply was one of resignation and also acceptance. He said in reply, "Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days." He declared that the Word of the LORD was good. The KJV translated the structure of the Hebrew sentence exactly. The emphasis is on the word "good" for it is placed in front of the verb. Hezekiah admitted that the punishment was right and therefore he said that it was good.

However he also thanked God for his mercies. He acknowledged that this life of exile would not happen in his lifetime. This was good because the LORD was merciful. It could very well be during his lifetime for he was the one who made the mistake. What a sad commentary. Nothing but this tragic sinful deed was recorded on king Hezekiah's last 15 years.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 39:1-8

TUESDAY: Isaiah 39:1-8

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 39:1-8

THURSDAY: Isaiah 39:1-8

FRIDAY: Isaiah 39:1-8.

Discussion Questions

1. Should CPBPC join hands with the Neo-evangelicals to stand against the homosexuals? What about joining hands with the Roman Catholics against the homosexuals?

2. Is it all right for Singapore to join forces with USA to secure her rights and sovereignty? Please elaborate.

3. Is it wrong for a believer to be brightened up by the visits of worldly men to his home or hospital when he is sick? Please elaborate.

4. Was it right for the LORD to punish future generations when it was king Hezekiah who sinned? In your opinion, what would have been a fairer punishment on king Hezekiah? Please elaborate.

5. Was the acceptance of king Hezekiah of God's punishment upon his descendants a true reflection of repentance and humility? Please elaborate.

6. Do you think that the punishment was too harsh? Please explain.

7. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
