

# If Only?

by **Reverend Sir Knight Donald C. Kerr**

An old story from the Bible tells about King Hezekiah. He had been warned by Isaiah to be leery of any foreign entanglements. However, the tiny kingdom of Israel was being severely threatened by the mighty empire of Assyria. A messenger from there came to the court of Hezekiah in a gesture of peace. The King Hezekiah was flattered and showed his Assyrian visitor everything in the palace, including access to Israel's military arsenal. Soon after that visit, the fierce monarch of Assyria, Sennacherib, came marching to the borders of Israel. So Hezekiah's emissary turned out to be not a friend but a spy.

If only Hezekiah had not been taken in. If only he had listened to what Isaiah was telling him. "If only" - how many times have we said it? If only we had listened! If only we had decided differently! How many decisions would have made life easier, "if only?"

We can't go back. We can't undo what is done. Often there is no second chance. We can either say "yes" or "no." When Britain was facing its troubles during the rebellious 17th century, the then young Prince Charles fell in love. He was secretly married, and a child was born. His mother, the exiled dowager Queen, was furious. She pleaded for her son to give up the child and his wife. Prince Charles replied, "If only, it was possible to go back and begin life over again," but he couldn't and didn't. From every misjudgment we learn a lesson. No one or no one thing is, of course, absolutely right. If we accept what is offered, we do so believing a "yes" is better than a "no." The Bible calls this the will of God. The will of God does not condemn. It gives us freedom. We all respond to a voice within us, which leads us to obedience rather than confusion. So, do we still say, "if only?," or, have we gone beyond that to reside in the company of those who would not turn their backs on us. The alternative to "if only" is to believe "thy will be done."

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