

“Hezekiah’s Illness”
2 Kings 20:1-11
(Preached at Trinity, October 16, 2022)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Our text opens by describing Hezekiah as becoming “mortally ill.” There were few medical treatments in Hezekiah’s day, even for a king. Treatments that we often take for granted were nonexistent. There were only the most-crude surgeries, no antibiotics, few pain killers, no vaccines. The life-expectancy was much less than what we enjoy today where it is not at all unusual for a person to live into his 90’s. Death from infection was high, which is what we are seeing in the life of Hezekiah. We read in **Verse 7** that the cause of his terminal illness was an infected boil.
2. Regardless of how effective modern medicine is, we do not have the ultimate control over our own mortality. Our lives are in the hands of God.
1 Samuel 2:6 NAU - "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up."
Psalms 90:10-12 NAU - "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away. ¹¹ Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? ¹² So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom."
3. Hezekiah was terribly ill and the Prophet Isaiah brought him the bad news:
2 Kings 20:1 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'"
4. No one wants to hear the doctor give us these words, “Get your affairs in order.” Hezekiah prays a brief, fervent prayer:
"Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly."
5. Is it proper to pray for our life and the life of our family? Is this a faithless prayer that puts greater emphasis upon this life than upon his eternal state? Doesn’t God praise Solomon for not praying for long life?
1 Kings 3:11-12 NAU - "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, ¹² behold, I have done according to your words."
6. God knows our lives are precious to us. In fact, we must never fail to recognize this. Each day is a gift from God. We may pray that God would protect our life and the life of our family. The greater issue is where we place our priority? What is our focus? Do we maintain attention on eternity?
Philippians 3:20-21 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of

our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

7. It is far better to pray that God will bless our life – the days we have.
- a. We need to pray that we will not live a day longer than what would glorify God. We need to pray that we will finish well, that God prepare us for the hour of our death, and that God will protect us from grievous sin. There are times that death would be far better if it preserves us from falling into sin, from spiritual decline and apathy.
 - Solomon did not finish well. His wives led him into idolatry.
1 Kings 11:4 NAU - "For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*."
 - We've also seen that Asa fell into the sin of carnal confidence and God chastened him –
2 Chronicles 16:12 NAU - "In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians."
 - And Uzziah spent his latter years as a leper because of the sin of his prideful heart.
 - b. In all of these cases, would it have been an act of mercy if their days had been cut short preventing them from dishonoring God?
 - c. God hears Hezekiah's prayer and grants him an additional 15 years. Three years after his recovery a son would be born to him, Manasseh, who would lead Israel in great wickedness. If Hezekiah had not lived Manasseh would not have been born.
Hezekiah would also fall into the sin of pride and bring God's judgment upon him. Had he not lived he would have been spared his foolish pride.
 - d. We can pray for life, but death may be preferable if our life doesn't honor God. We should pray, "O God, help me to finish well. Deliver me from ever bringing you dishonor."
8. In the previous chapter we saw further evidence of the heart of this godly king. Upon seeing the dire straits of Judah, he prayed. **See 2 Kings 19:14-19**
- A. Hezekiah spread the concern of his heart before the Lord – **V.14**
He wasn't telling God anything He did not already know. Prayer is not providing God with information. Rather, Hezekiah was demonstrating his dependence upon God in *every* area of life.
Symbolically he was saying, "Here it is Lord, I turn it over to You."
Al Martin – "For what is prayer in the last analysis? It is a conscious spreading out of my helplessness before God."
 - B. In Hezekiah's prayer we can see the relationship between God's sovereignty and our prayers?
 1. God has appointed all things that come to pass, but He has also decreed the use of means. God has decreed that we pray.
And don't overlook God decreed to use a cake of figs in the healing.

2. Because Hezekiah prayed (**V.20**), God stepped in and changed the course of History. (He didn't change His decree, but God honored Hezekiah's prayer as a part of His decree)
2 Kings 19:20 NAU - "Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard *you*."
 3. There is no conflict between God's absolute sovereignty and the power of prayer. This is just how God has chosen to work.
9. Hezekiah was ill, very ill – Apparently, he had an infected boil (Verse 21). Hezekiah could see he was dying and in **Verse 1** Isaiah brought the word from God confirming the diagnosis--he was going to die.
- A. We should note, this episode actually took place before **Chapter 19**. Notice in **Verse 6** Jerusalem's deliverance from Assyria is yet to come. We find Hezekiah facing conflict both personally and nationally.
 - B. Hezekiah responded to the conflicts by immediately turning his face once again to the One who could bring deliverance.
- I want to set before you some observations regarding Hezekiah's prayer:

- I. He prayed from where he was.
 - A. We serve an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God
 1. In the previous chapter Hezekiah went to the temple
2 Kings 19:14 NAU - "Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD."
 2. Now he turns his face to the wall
2 Kings 20:2 NAU - "Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD"
This presumes he was in his bedroom laying upon his bed.
There would have been others in the room and turning towards the wall was a sign he wanted to be left alone. He was too sick to leave his room.
 3. Prayer is not limited to a particular place.
1689 LBC 22:6 – "Neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the Gospel, tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed; but God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth."
 - B. The wonderful thing about being a child of God is access to the Father's throne from wherever we are whenever we have need.
 1. We need not go to a particular place
 2. You can pray from your bed of sickness and death
 3. You can pray from the darkest prison
 4. If you traveled to the far reaches of the universe God hears.
- II. It was a brief prayer
 - A. God is not impressed by many words and much speaking.
Matthew 6:7-8 NAU - "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

1. Thomas Boston – “Lay no weight on the quantity of your prayers; that is to say, how long or how many they are. These things avail nothing with God, by whom prayers are not measured, but weighed.”
 2. C. H. Spurgeon – “It is necessary to draw near unto God, but it is not required of you to prolong your speech till everyone is longing to hear the word ‘Amen’.”
 3. Notice our Lord’s model prayer – less than 20 seconds long
- B. This does not diminish the importance of spending much time in prayer.
Martin Luther – “If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory throughout the day.”
We need to be careful of the danger of empty prating before God. There is much for which we need to pray, but we must never think that God is impressed by mere words.
- C. Sometimes in the depth of our need we can only cry out as the Apostles did,
Matthew 8:25 NAU - "And they came to *Him* and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"

III. Hezekiah recognized the relationship between our heart and our prayer life.

- A. The Bible tells us that our holiness has a direct bearing upon the effectiveness of our prayers.
1. Hezekiah pleads before God, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight."
 2. Hezekiah was not claiming sinless perfection but covenant faithfulness.
 3. James reminds us that it is the prayer of the righteous man that avails much.
James 5:16 KJV – “Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
 4. Peter reminds us that our sin can hinder our prayers
1 Peter 3:7 NAU - "You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."
 5. Thomas Brooks – “If you would have God hear you when you pray, you must hear him when he speaks.”
Andrew Murray – “How our prayer avails depends upon what we are and what our life is.”
- B. We should also notice that Hezekiah’s prayer was not dull and unfeeling. It was prayer from the heart.
1. It was a fervent prayer – **Verse 3** – "And Hezekiah wept bitterly."
James 5:16 KJV – “Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
 2. God is not to be manipulated by our tears as a child uses his tears to get his way with his parents. But genuine prayer is not without feeling.

- IV. Once again, God heard Hezekiah's prayer
- A. God hears the prayers of His children
1. We saw this in the previous chapter
2 Kings 19:20 NAU - "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard *you*.'"
 2. We see it again here
2 Kings 20:5 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD."
- B. This does not diminish the sovereignty of God
1. God works according to His purpose
2 Kings 20:16-17 NAU - "Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD. ¹⁷ 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD."
 2. God is sovereign over the length of our days – He is the giver and taker of life.
1 Samuel 2:6 NAU - "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up."
James 4:13-15 NAU - "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."
- C. Did God change His purpose? No. God's purposes are unchanging.
James 1:17 NAU - "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."
1. God purposed before time began that Hezekiah would become sick unto death, and that he would pray, and that God would spare his life for another 15 years. He died at the age of 54
2 Kings 18:1-2 NAU - "Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. ² He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah."

2. God works all things according to His eternal decree – and yet, He hears our prayers.

Conclusion:

1. All of God's dealings toward His children are done out of love for their good. God lengthened Hezekiah's life because He loved Him – it was for his good.
2. Had God chosen not to lengthen Hezekiah's life that too would have been for his good. But why cause the illness in the first place. And why send Isaiah with a sentence of death before reversing His pronouncement?
 - A. God brings trials of suffering and heartache into our life to humble us and shape us in holiness.
 - a. Charles Spurgeon suffered greatly with his health.
 - b. David Brainard died of tuberculosis in much weakness, yet God used him greatly
 - c. God often calls men home after brief lives – yet it is always for their good and God's glory.
 - a. David Brainard at the age of 29
 - b. Keith Green before the age of 30
 - c. Hezekiah died at the age of 54
 - B. God's ways are unfathomable. We pray and pray fervently, but we don't pretend to know all of the plans and purposes of God. Our prayers must always be, "If it be Thy will."