

Hezekiah's Days Numbered

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Bible Text: Isaiah 38:1-8

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If you will, look with me in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 38. As we know and have read, Hezekiah was a king that the Lord raised up to establish order again for a time in the kingdom of Israel among the tribes that remained, Judah and Benjamin. The other 10 having been already taken into captivity and were no more, a very dark and bleak era in which not only to live, but for Hezekiah to reign.

I see Hezekiah as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is the king. He is the prophet, he is the priest and he is the king. When you consider his subjects, and if you are the Lord's, you are one of his subjects. Yet what sort of subject are you? Rebellious at heart. In truth, in reality, not worth even having our name mentioned. I know people get very proud of who they are because of their earthly titles and positions and we have all dealt with such people, but we deal with ourselves. You know, we have too high opinion of ourselves, but for the grace of God.

Well, we find at a very dark time in the history of Israel where the army of Assyrian had been threatening to destroy Israel and annihilate it that the Lord intervened in a mighty way is what we saw last time. It wasn't a man. Hezekiah was the king, but it was beyond any power that he had as a man, as a mere man to answer this army was too great. And we saw last time in Isaiah 37 that it was actually the angel of the Lord that went forth. And I would be a capital T there and a capital A, angel being the word messenger. This was none other than Christ himself who purposed to defend Jerusalem at this time, defend this people, protect them, because that a great number of the Assyrians, actually 185,000 of them would be dead corpses. That is an interesting way of putting it. A corpse is usually dead anyway, but it is for emphasis, you know, dead corpses.

You see, Hezekiah was just that, a type, just like all the types of the Old Testament. They weren't ... there was no salvation in them. Even the priests of old failed. They had to first offer sacrifices for themselves and then for that of the people. So when we see Hezekiah being just a type of Christ he was just that. He stood as much in need of deliverance as the very people that he represented. But not our Lord. Our Lord as the substitute of his people is the true Savior and representative.

But here in Isaiah chapter 38 as if to humble Hezekiah in the face of this mighty deliverance of the Lord, lest he, like Paul said, be exalted above measure. He was given

revelation above any other of the apostles and yet lest he be exalted above measure, it was said the Lord used Satan to be a thorn in his flesh.

Now a lot of people assume that just means some sort of physical ailment that Paul had that was a thorn in his flesh. I believe it was deeper than that. I believe that the Lord dealt mightily in Paul's heart. The flesh being what we all suffer from. We are talking about our spiritual flesh, lest we be exalted above measure, lest anybody here think that because they are the Lord's and because he redeemed them and because we are objects of his grace that somehow we are better than those of our fellow man. We are not. Christ did not come into this world to save... to call the righteous, ones righteous in their own eyes and their morality to repentance, but sinners. And my prayer is that every time we meet as we do, as our custom is, that it be with that mind. I am but a sinner in need once again of the Savior. And often the Lord will bring a trial. He will bring an affliction of soul to cause us not to hope in anything in this flesh, but Christ alone.

And that is why here in Isaiah 38, on the heels of this great victory we read:

“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death.”¹

So a terminal illness.

“And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order.”²

As he marginal reading is: Give charge concerning thy house. Talk to your servants. Talk to everybody else. Get that house in order. We all talk about having a death file. I know it is a little gruesome to think about, but I have got one where, you know, things that should I die these are some things that need to be taken care of. It goes into that little death file.

You know, put your house in order.

Now what I find interesting here in verse one it doesn't say when, but simply:

“...for thou shalt die, and not live.”³

Could that not be said of everyone of us sitting right here? You know, let's don't be in denial. There were some... there are some that have passed that when we heard of their death we were shocked. It might have been a young child. It might have been a young person. I don't care what age it is, most people think they died to soon. It could be at someone's centenarian, they are over 100 years old, but when they die it is like wow.

But reality is we live all of us under this sentence. Thou shalt die and not live.

¹ Isaiah 38:1.

² Isaiah 38:2.

³ Isaiah 38:1.

And then we read in verse two:

“Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect...”⁴

There it is the word would be upright.

“...heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.”⁵

He wept with a great weeping.

Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.⁶

And we all know there are those that say that prayer changes things. I would beg to differ. There is no prayer that you are going to pray that is going to change God’s mind. I believe that even in this portion of Scripture, if you will read it carefully, you will see that that was not the case. It was not that Hezekiah wept and prayed and therefore the Lord extended his life as a result. I believe when it says there in verse five:

“I will add unto thy days 15 years...”⁷

It was a clarification to what Isaiah had told him. All the Lord told Isaiah initially was to set your house in order for thou shalt die and not live. He didn’t say, die now. He didn’t say die tomorrow. He just said, “Thou shalt die and not live.” And as Hezekiah heard that news and he wept sore, our Lord actually send Isaiah back to comfort him and to tell him, “When I said you would die, what I mean is you will die in 15 years. I am going to add in the sense of your thinking this is tomorrow, but it is actually going to be 15 years from now.”

All right? I truly believe that is the sense. There is no change in God’s decree. There is no change in what he has purposed. Our days are already numbered. You might have a doctor that tells you that you have a terminal illness and that typically people with this

⁴ Isaiah 38:2-3.

⁵ Isaiah 38:3.

⁶ Isaiah 38:4-8.

⁷ Isaiah 38:5.

terminal illness live about two weeks or three weeks. That is man's determination. What if the Lord has determined that you live a year with it or two years? Those are according to the Lord's decrees. Our days are in his hands. Was it that Hezekiah had done anything specific that brought this death sentence? No more than what is specific to any of us in this room. And that is we are all sons of Adam and that our days are numbered. And would that we would live with that in mind. This life is temporal. It will not go on forever.

And you might sit there and say, "Well, what if the Word of the Lord came to me and said to me, 'Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live'"? Well, you might as well take the what if out, because the Word of the Lord has already come and has already declared it that you are going to die.

You know, in the insurance business we have a number of products that we offer to people in the work site, work site benefits. And one is accident. One is cancer. One is critical illness, involves if someone had to go into intensive care. It covers heart attack, stroke, coma, these sorts of things. And it is interesting in talking to people, one of their objections is, well, what if I never get cancer? What if I never have to use it to go into intensive care? What if I never have an accident? You know, what good then is the coverage?

Well, one thing it is like your car insurance. You have it in case, you know, you are not going to get a reimbursement at the end of your life because you drove for 45 years without an accident. It is there to cover you.

But one thing I like to tell people is, oh, by the way there is a product that we offer that you will most certainly use and it is called life insurance. There is not a one of us getting out of here alive. And this is the Word of the Lord to set our house in order. You know, you, irrespective of how good I feel right now, there is a death sentence in this body. There is a day determined already of the Lord in which we will die and not live. Is it not important for us to be mindful of these things and not to be delusional into thinking that it happens to others, but not to me?

And the Lord constantly gives us these particular warnings. And so I don't believe this was a sentence of death, even though it says here that Hezekiah was sick unto death. I see us all here sick unto death. It is already in our bodies. It is, you know, it has been declared. And so it shall be.

Now how do we face it? You know how did Hezekiah face it? You read here in verse two it says:

"Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD."⁸

We sort of picture him maybe lying on a bed and rolling over and facing the wall and crying unto the Lord. But I don't believe that is what is being declared here. The wall

⁸ Isaiah 38:2.

that we see here referred to and the praying unto the Lord, I believe, has to do with him turning toward the wall of the temple. Here was the temple which had been built and even as Daniel in his day prayed toward where that temple would have been three times a day, Hezekiah turned to the Lord. That was where those that were the Lord's looked. In that day it was the place of sacrifice. It was the place of substitution where the priest would go in and out with those sacrifices and offer them unto the Lord.

I believe the connection in 38:2, the beginning and the end are together. He wasn't praying toward a physical wall. But he was much like that publican that was in the temple that dared not lift his eyes even toward heaven, but beat his breast and said, "Lord, be merciful to me the sinner."

In other words, where was his hope? If it has been declared that I should die and not live and in spite of all of the successes that the Lord had given him as a king, even with the mighty deliverance from the Assyrians that he had nothing with which to glory, but that his hope was in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Is that where you look as you consider the death sentence that is in your body right now, knowing that you will die and not live? Where do you turn?

Hezekiah turned to the Lord, that temple being as a type of Christ through whom and to whom we make all of our petitions, him being the only mediator between God and men. He prayed unto the Lord.

Look back in 1 Kings chapter eight. This was Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple when it was first built. And let's begin in verse 37 so that you have some understanding of why I believe this is what Hezekiah did.

If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)⁹

You know, in the face of this declaration Hezekiah was not looking to the works of his own hands. He was not looking to anything he had done, even to the glory and honor of his God where he even took that, as we saw in 1 Kings 18 the brazen serpent that Israel had turned into an idol and he burned it, ground it up and burned it before their eyes. But none of that would be the cause and reason for the Lord to look upon him with favor in the face of death. He looked toward that temple and prayed unto the Lord.

⁹ 1 Kings 8:37-39.

Now some might take exception. They might say, “Well, no, that is not what he says in verse three,” but I am telling you that is what he says in verse three. When he said:

“Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth...”¹⁰

It could not be said that he walked before the Lord in truth if he was putting any sort of confidence in his flesh. That is the biggest lie that has people running headstrong into hell today, because they think there is something that God approves in them. That is a lie.

If you are a sinner in whom God has revealed his Son, you walk in the truth. And the truth is that apart from that shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from that righteousness that he came to this earth and earned, merited, worked out, established and upon completion of his death God the Father imputed it to your account unless that is your hope, you do not walk in the truth. I don't care how moral a person you think you are, it is nothing but a pile of dung before a holy God. And that is what Hezekiah was pleading here. He looked to the sacrifices, not that there was any hope in those animal sacrifices in any way to give him a standing before God, but what they represented, who they represented. And when he talks about a perfect heart, he is not talking about a sinless heart. But he is talking about a heart that God himself by his Spirit has taken and drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ. And based upon Christ and his work, God looked upon him with favor. And that is why he said:

“...and have done that which is good in thy sight.”¹¹

It is not any personal works, but looking to the work of Christ. And then it says he wept sore.

You know, you could say, well, he wept in that he felt sorry for himself. I don't believe so. This was a heart that the Lord had broken, a heart that could have been otherwise left hardened, but the Lord brought low in tenderness. That is what grace does. And I am confident that just like the prayer of any of the Lord's, if there is that weeping, if there is that tear shed, it is over the knowledge of our own worthlessness and who is the Lord that the would consider me.

I believe that is what the grace of God does and that is why when we read here in verse five where the Lord told Isaiah to go and tell Hezekiah whom he calls here the God of David thy father, a covenant God, he is reminding him that there is a covenant between the Father and the Son that is the reason for God showing any sort of grace or mercy. And he says, “I have heard thy prayer.” Ask yourself, how does the Lord hear any of our prayers? Is it not because of the representative? Is it not because of the substitute which was typified by those priests that went in day and night unto the Lord?

And where he says, “I have seen thy tears,” your tears will not turn God's heart. But when he says, “I have seen thy tears,” he is talking there about that humility of heart.

¹⁰ Isaiah 38:3.

¹¹ Ibid.

Again, where the sinner's eyes are taken off themselves and put upon the Savior. And who gives those tears, but God? Who gives that repentance, but God?

And so he says:

“I will add unto thy days fifteen years.”¹²

There will be 15 more years, Hezekiah in which you have to live.

That was a special grace at that particular time to cause Hezekiah to know that even though he said that he was going to die and not live that there would be a 15 year period in which Hezekiah would yet live.

We don't have that information. I don't know. You know, it may be that I am know I am dying. I know I preach as a dying man to dying men. It has not been revealed to me that I have another 15 years. I don't know. But the important thing is that our days are ordered of the Lord and there is a reason. Until the Lord has finished with us, fulfilled his purpose for us upon this earth, we are immortal. You know, we fear sometimes certain things happening. You know, accidents and other things, but there is not a one of us sitting in this room that is going to leave this earth one second before or one second after what the Lord has determined.

But there is a little story in a story here with Hezekiah. You remember Paul Harvey used to have that little thing, the rest of the story. Do you realize that this particular time in Hezekiah's life there was no heir to the throne? He had not yet... God had not yet given him a child. And when you go back and read in 2 Kings chapter 21 you will find that approximately three years into this time that the Lord, of the 15, that the Lord had told Hezekiah that he would live, the Lord gave him a child and that the lineage of Christ ran through that child.

If you will look at 2 Kings chapter 21—and I believe brother Lane preached on this some time back—it is just I wish we had time to hear it again, but I will let you read it. I will let you go home and read this in 2 Kings chapter 21. But he was the son of Hezekiah, the only son. As it says there in 2 Kings 20 and you can read 2 Kings 20. It is the Lord's commentary to this time of sickness of which the Lord spared Hezekiah, but you can see in verse 21 of 2 Kings 20:

“And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.”¹³

Now who was Hezekiah? He was a king of Judah. What was the line and lineage of our Lord as far as earthly lineage is concerned? The line of Judah.

Now here is the shocker when you read the story of Manasseh, you would think that the Lord would give him a son just like his dad. We tend to like to think that. Our kid is

¹² Isaiah 38:5.

¹³ 2 Kings 20:21.

going to be just like us. If you have a high opinion of yourself you might think that is pretty good, but do you know what? He does give us kids just like us, because we are all sons of Adam. And when you see your kids, you see yourself. We are all depraved creatures in rebellion against God unless the Lord is pleased to deliver us.

Manasseh, seemingly undid everything that Hezekiah sought to establish as far as worship, as far as order, et cetera. If you look at verse nine of 2 Kings 21:

“But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.”¹⁴

So the Lord caused Manasseh to live a very blood thirsty life. If you look over in verse 16:

“Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.”¹⁵

And it says:

“Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?”¹⁶

And so you look at that and you think, well, how on earth would God ever bring glory to his name through that? Well, that was the lineage of Christ, just as you can go back and find a Tamar in the lineage. You can find a Bathsheba, a Rahab.

Christ’s purity and Christ’s coming as the substitute for sinners being the seed of the woman, was not dependent upon the righteousness of those through whom the Lord brought him, not even Mary. People make an idol out of Mary, the virgin Mary, immaculate conception. You know, they exalt Mary above measure. She called Christ her Savior. She stood as much in need of his shed blood and his righteousness as anybody. But do you know what? If one is the Lord’s and God has chosen him and Christ has redeemed him, I don’t care who rebellious a life they live, God is going to get him and he is going to draw them to himself. But it is going to be the Lord doing it.

Such was the case of Manasseh. If you look over in 2 Chronicles chapter 33 and that is why I am glad we have got all the Scripture to read, but in 2 Chronicles 33 and verse 11 this, again, gives us the story of Manasseh who was 12 years old when he began to reign.

And you can see in verse seven:

¹⁴ 2 Kings 21:9.

¹⁵ 2 Kings 21:16.

¹⁶ 2 Kings 21:17.

“And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever.”¹⁷

He actually set an idol up in that temple. You talk about blasphemy. If it were us we would say, written off, reprobate. But you read over here in 2 Chronicles chapter 33 beginning with verse 11.

Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.¹⁸

There is a reason that God does what he does. We read it with the men before the meeting here today. Bill read it for us in Ecclesiastes chapter three that there is a time and a season and a purpose for everything under heaven. We bow. We wait upon him. We look to him. But Christ is the reason that God ever hears any sinner. And may he give us hearts to look to him.

All right, brother Mike.

¹⁷ 2 Chronicles 33:7.

¹⁸ 2 Chronicles 33:11-13.