

210124 Hezekiah Prays—God Answers and Heals 38/03 January 24, 2021

Dear Friends,

We cannot question or doubt that, Old or New Testament, God has a well-defined and fixed way of "Doing faith," both for individual believers and for His worshipping community, referred to in the New Testament as the church. A conscientious believer's constant goal should be to study (You will never learn it by speed reading Scripture) Scripture to find those answers. In my younger years, the fairly consistent belief among preachers and respected leaders in the church was that Scripture provides us with God's way, and does so with repetition and clarity. In later years, I have encountered some (Thank the Lord, only a few) folks who choose to ignore Scripture and claim, "You know, the Bible doesn't tell us very much about...so we are free to do this part of our spiritual life as we wish." If you ever hear anyone make such a comment, you can freely, and with comfortable conviction, refer them to [2Ti 3:16-17](#). Paul's inspired words categorically contradict this faithless claim, "...*that the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished unto all good works.***" So do we choose to believe the unbeliever or the words of Scripture? The more we study, truly study Scripture the more answers we shall glean from Scripture that answer our questions and supply us with God's pattern for "...**all good works.**" Perhaps what these folks who claim the Bible is a book of non-answers strive to justify--to rationalize--are not a "Good work" at all.

We need not compromise Scripture's teaching for any reason--ever. However, as Scripture observes, including our study passage, on occasion, the Lord's people find themselves in compromising, less than ideal situations where precisely following the Lord's way seems difficult, if not impossible. In the case of Hezekiah in our study passage, he and the priests took their situation to the Lord and sought His guidance. Their reaction did not reject God's way. Nor did they claim that God simply failed to give them necessary answers in Scripture or in His law to them. They faithfully acknowledged the problem, and they prayed for the Lord's guidance and healing of the situation they faced. And the Lord answered their prayer.

Do you face a faith-dilemma today? Follow Hezekiah's example. Take it to the Lord, and listen and wait for His answer. Do not pray, and then immediately ignore Scripture and the Lord, and do things according to your private opinion or preference. Listen for His answer. He is ever merciful and kind. If we go to Him, and if we wait for His answer, He will show us His "Right way" to a righteous solution.

Love in Jesus,
Joe Holder

Hezekiah Prays—God Answers and Heals

For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord. ([2Ch 30:17-21](#) KJV 1900)

After Jeroboam's revolt and the northern kingdom's separation from Judah and God's way of worship in Jerusalem, the northern kingdom plunged itself ever deeper into sin and idolatry. However, there were apparently many people in the north who remained loyal to God and to the godly way of worship. The Lord sent both Elijah and Elisha to the northern kingdom. By the time of Hezekiah, the Assyrians

had conquered the northern kingdom. When the Assyrians conquered a people, they would remove large numbers of people from the conquered land and disperse them throughout their kingdom, an effective way to prevent future rebellion among conquered peoples.

Based on the earlier verses of [2Ch 30](#), Hezekiah wanted to do what he could to heal the breach between the northern and southern kingdoms, so he sent an invitation to the faithful people throughout the whole kingdom, what was, at his time, two separate kingdoms, Judah in the south and the tattered remnants of conquered Israel in the north. Many of the loyal people in the north accepted his invitation and traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Their long neglect of godly worship under the guidance and teaching of the Levitical priests left them ceremonially unclean. However, their desire and intent was godly. They invested great personal sacrifice and exposed themselves to significant risk to travel from their homes in the Assyrian occupied northern kingdom to Jerusalem for this gathering.

Because they arrived late, the set Passover date had passed. Further, the northern people were ceremonially unclean. What should Hezekiah and the priests do? Because of their late arrival and their uncleanness, exclude them from the ceremonies of worship, the very reason they had traveled to Jerusalem? Any other choice would deviate from the Lord's established ways. What should they do?

In [Nu 9:6-10](#), Moses learned of some people who were defiled by touching a dead body as Passover time approached. Based on the established quarantine of the Law, they were unclean. Should they be allowed to participate in Passover or excluded? The Lord allowed them to participate, despite their technical uncleanness. This passage might create a dilemma for the legalistic minds in the faith, but not for the faithful.

In a normal Passover, the head of each household would kill and prepare the Passover lamb for his household. In this case, the priests killed and prepared the lambs for these families. It was an acceptable way to acknowledge the uncleanness of these people, but yet allow them to participate. Old or New Testament, God's way is to be respected and followed, but not in a manner to become harsh or exclusive.

Compared to the fine details of Moses' Law (Of God's Law to Moses for Israel), this event posed a number of deviations from the rules of Passover and worship. The date was a month late, and many of the northern kingdom people had not arrived in time to apply the established process of sanctification that would prepare them for participation in Passover and other worship activities. What should Hezekiah and the priests do? Exclude these people from participation? If they followed the technical rules of the Law, they would exclude these people from participation. However, not because they held God or His laws in low regard, or considered it a small matter to deviate, but they regarded the effort these northern kingdom people had made to present themselves for correct worship to be genuine.

Over my sixty-six years of preaching, I've encountered numerous occasions where someone wanted to ignore or to deviate from New Testament teaching. One human cannot judge another person's heart or motives, beyond what that person reveals. However, on multiple occasions, these people have been surprisingly candid about their motives. Often they revealed a low esteem for God and for His ways. Such a low regard never—under any circumstance—gives a professed believer a free pass to ignore, contradict, or violate God's commanded way. So I offer my personal caution. We have no Biblical basis whatever to usurp this passage and claim that God doesn't really care if we are faithful and follow His ways of life and worship or not. In this case, both the priests and Hezekiah fully realized the deviation and took steps to seek the Lord's longsuffering in the matter.

But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

Rather than rationalizing the deviation, ignoring and dishonoring the Lord, Hezekiah took the matter directly to the Lord and prayed for the Lord's "*pardon*." He included the observation that his prayer for forgiveness included all those northern kingdom people who left home and endured the dangers and hardship of the journey because they had truly prepared their hearts to seek the Lord. Further, our study passage tells us that the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah's prayer and "...*healed the people*."

Hezekiah's prayer gives us a beautiful example of a New Testament passage that we often ponder.

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. (1Jo 5:16)

Sadly often, we stick our interests on trying to unravel the "*sin unto death*," and wholly ignore the powerful admonition that is clearly stated. Hezekiah observed the situation with the ritual uncleanness of the people from the northern kingdom, but, rather than rejecting them and adding more division, he sought the Lord's guidance, and prayed for the Lord to forgive and bless based on the circumstance and the sincere devotion the people from the north manifested by their very presence in Jerusalem. Hezekiah observed and recognized the deviation, the sin. What did he do? He prayed for the Lord to forgive and to heal the breach, and the Lord answered his prayer. When you and I observe a believer who deviates from the Biblical way, what does John tell us to do? He teaches us to follow Hezekiah's example. Pray for the Lord to convict that brother or sister and lead them to repentance and pray for their forgiveness.

When Jeroboam first led the rebellion of the northern tribes, he quickly set up a place of worship to the north, in the opposite direction from Jerusalem. He appointed low-life men as priests. Rather quickly all his inventions eroded into full Baal worship, pagan idolatry. Jeroboam made a concerted effort to prevent anyone from the north even thinking about going south to Jerusalem to worship God rightly with the Levites in God's house. True worship creates a climate of forgiveness and healing, the last thing Jeroboam wanted.

In this rich and instructive lesson, we find a Bible example of the Lord specifically answering the prayers of His people with a blessing and healing.

What should believers do when they observe another believer in sin? John tells us. Go to the prayer line, not the phone (Gossip) line. Pray for that person. I do not offer a firm view of the sin unto death, other than the point that Scripture does not usually present lessons that we need to understand in mystical vagueness. The most obvious "*Sin unto death*" is the sin which a believer refuses to acknowledge and repent, cease doing. Seeing a believer commit a single act of sin and praying for them assures a good outcome. When you see a believer over a prolonged time habitually engaged in a particular sin, John in no way forbids our praying for them. He simply tells us he does not command or require it. If a believer habitually indulges any particular sin, he has likely wrestled with conviction already, along with chastening, and he has chosen to ignore the Lord and cater to the sin. Your prayers will likely not change that bad habit. John doesn't indicate that the person committing the sin unto death "Is not really born again," as modern legalistic judges pronounce. Can you name a single sin that, if habitually practiced, is not "*unto death*" of your spiritual vitality and joy?

Our faith-focus should always be on what Scripture teaches, not what human faithless speculation judges. The amazing treasure of prayer, including Scripture's clear account of answered prayers, gives us one of Scripture's richest treasures of the Lord's loving grace and care for His beloved children. I love the Spurgeon quote below that reminds us of prayer's power. All horizontal paths of relief may be blocked by your adversary, but no adversary can block your vertical path. Much as I like Spurgeon's words, I love David's in Scripture more!

(Ancient-Modern Bible Notes) Prayer is an open door which none can shut. Devils may surround you

on all sides, but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine, or storm, so long as heavenly succors can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the time of our necessities. (Charles Spurgeon)

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. ([Ps 34:15](#))

The Lord may wisely answer "No," but He always hears and answers your prayers.

Elder Joe Holder