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2 KINGS 20:1-21

Last week we were introduced to a good king...and we said that it felt like a breath of fresh air to finally be introduced to a king who pleased God in all that he did. We saw last week that Hezekiah brought great reform to Judah.

We also saw last week how the Assyrians came against Judah and God delivered Judah from the hand of the Assyrians.

But, today we see another phase of Hezekiah's life. We're going to see how Hezekiah faced a very great crisis in his life...

2 Kings 20:1-3...

Now, Hezekiah was 39 years old at this point. In his 39 years he had faced some very big crises that required some very big decisions.

When he became king, he faced a **moral and spiritual crisis**. None of the other kings before him, even the "good" kings had torn down the high places of false worship. So Hezekiah had to make the decision to remove them or let them stand. And he had to make the decision to clean up the temple and reinstate the sacrifices. That was a **moral and spiritual crisis**.

When the Assyrians threatened to destroy Jerusalem and take the people of Judah captive, Hezekiah faced a **political and military crisis**. And Hezekiah had to make the decision to take this before the Lord and rely on His deliverance.

But, today we see Hezekiah facing a **personal crisis**.

Hezekiah is 39 years old. The Bible tells us back in **chapter 18** that he was 25 when he began to reign and he reigned for 29 years before he died. So, that means he died when he was 54. So if you take away these 15 extra years that we're going to see God gave him, that leaves 39.

So let's think of the personal crisis that Hezekiah faced.

Hezekiah was faced with illness. We're not told what kind. We're simply told that it was a **very serious illness**.

NAS – mortal illness

NIV – the point of death

KJV – a sickness unto death

And the prophet Isaiah came to him and told him to set his house in order. I don't believe there is anything like a serious illness that will force a person to look at the affairs of his life and think about setting things in order.

This doesn't necessarily mean there are spiritual problems, although there could be. It simply means there are things that come to mind when we are faced with death, that we don't think much about when we're healthy.

Not only should we see **the illness he faced**, but **how he faced that illness**. How did Hezekiah respond to the news that Isaiah gave him that he would not recover from this illness?

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This news is going to come to all of us one day. Some of us have already faced and are facing right now very serious illness. How do we respond and react when this kind of news comes to us?

God's children are not immune to serious illness!

God's children get heart disease...

God's children get diabetes...

God's children get Alzheimer's...

God's children get Parkinson's...

God's children get cancer...

God's children get leukemia...

When God's children get sick, it's not a sign that they're not walking with God. And if God doesn't choose to heal them, it's also not a sign that they don't have enough faith.

We've all faced hard times and we'll face them again. The question is... how are we going to respond? Will we respond with panic and blame the Lord? Or will we respond with grace and trust the Lord?

Let's look and see how **Hezekiah** responded to this crisis in **his** life. Hezekiah responded by praying! And this should be the response to any crisis in our life, shouldn't it?

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall. Was this a sign that Hezekiah was mad and pouting? Or was this simply Hezekiah's trying to establish a private moment with God? We don't know. We certainly don't see that God was upset with him about this.

And Hezekiah wept bitter tears. Who wouldn't? If one of God's men came and told you that God said you would die and not live, would there be any tears? I believe there would be!

Did you know God stores our tears in a bottle and records them in His book? (**Psalm 56:8**)

But, the Bible that tells me that is the same Bible that tells me that one day all our tears will be wiped away and there will be no more crying and no more pain and no more death! (**Revelation 21:4**)

Then we see that Hezekiah reminded God that he had walked before Him in truth and with a whole heart and had done that which was good in His sight. Some people call this a self-righteous prayer...but it was a prayer of truthfulness. Again, we don't see the Lord being upset with Hezekiah about this prayer, and if He's not upset with him I don't believe you and I should be either.

Let me ask you the question I had to ask myself this week as I studied...If this happened to me could I say as Hezekiah said, "Remember, God, how I've walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight."

Well, we've seen the **illness of Hezekiah** and the **response of Hezekiah** to that illness, but we also see **the answer to Hezekiah's prayer**.

Verses 4-7...

Sometimes we tend to think God's grace didn't exist before the Cross...but I want to tell you it did!

Let me ask you...

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Did God grant Hezekiah fifteen more years because he **deserved** it?

Let me ask you this...

Did Hezekiah walk before God in truth? **Yes.**

Did Hezekiah walk before God with a whole heart? **Yes.**

Had Hezekiah done what was good in God's sight? **Yes.**

Was that why God chose to extend his life fifteen more years? **No.**

God said that He would add fifteen more years to his life and that He would deliver him and Jerusalem from the hands of the Assyrians for "**My own sake and for My servant David's sake.**"

He chose to do this because of **His grace.**

Hezekiah had done nothing to deserve God's goodness. And undeserved goodness is grace!

Isaiah told Hezekiah to place a cake of figs...a poultice...on his boil. And Hezekiah did this. Poultices were common remedies...they were a common home medicine in those days. And Hezekiah did this and he recovered.

But, how did Hezekiah know that this was a lasting remedy. How did he know that he really would live fifteen more years?

Verses 8-11...

Well, Hezekiah wondered that as well, so let's look at the sign of assurance that Hezekiah sought.

Do you think Hezekiah doubted the word of God? Or do you think **Hezekiah just wanted to make certain that Isaiah had gotten the word of God straight?**

I mean, Isaiah came in and told Hezekiah that he needed to set his house in order because he was going to die and a little while later, he came back and said, "Hey, guess what? God had changed His mind. You're going to live."

I believe you and I would have wanted a sign as well, don't you?

Do you ever long for a sign from God? I think we all do...

I don't believe God's going to turn back time to give you and me a sign...but I want to tell you this...

We have a **better** sign!

We have all the promises and prophecies of God that have already been kept and fulfilled. And we know He is able to do all that He has promised will happen in the future!

We have the promise that no **one** or no **thing** will ever snatch us out of God's hand...

We have **so much more** than Hezekiah had.

We have the Word of God!

We have the Holy Spirit!

We have the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus!

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The “steps” mentioned here is a sundial. And as the sun would sink down in the west the shadow would go farther and farther down the steps. That’s the way they could tell the time of day. The time of day was determined by where the sun was casting a shadow on the steps. And so when the sun would go down, the shadows would creep down the steps of the sundial.

And Isaiah said the shadow would go forward ten steps or it would go backward ten steps and he allowed Hezekiah to choose which would be the greater sign to him. And Hezekiah said, “It’s **easy** for the shadow to **decline** ten steps; let the shadow turn **backward** ten steps...that’s **harder**.”

Either one would have been a miracle. But, neither one was hard for God to do.

So, I believe there are **two things** we can learn from this little passage of Scripture...the first thing is something about the **power of prayer**.

I want to tell you that God desires for His children to pray. Prayer really **does** have the power to change things. It surely did for Hezekiah.

Listen, Isaiah wasn’t some wandering preacher who went house to house telling folks that they were going to die. Isaiah went to Hezekiah and said, “**Thus says the Lord**, Hezekiah...you shall die and not live.”

Can we manipulate God? No.

Can we coerce God? No.

Can we force God to do something He doesn’t want to do? No.

But, many times we forget that God delights in answering the prayers of His people. James says it like this: “***You have not because you ask not.***”

And somehow in a way we don’t understand, many times God has chosen to limit His power to the prayers of His people.

How does this harmonize with the sovereignty of God? I have no idea. I only know the Bible teaches us to pray...

- to pray without ceasing...
- and to pray knowing that God wants to do for us exceeding abundantly more than we could ever think or ask...
- and also to pray believing that He does all things well.

If God chooses to heal us, then **that’s** God’s best for us, but if God chooses **not** to heal us, then **that** is God’s best for us as well.

Because the simple fact is that God doesn’t heal all people who pray. If He did, Christians would never die! I don’t believe there are any real born-again believers who would fail to pray if told they have a sickness unto death, do you?

The other thing we can learn from this little passage is that **there are two ways to live and die**.

Remember Sennacherib from last week? He lived contrary to the will of God and he died by the hands of his own sons. He lived and died under the judgment of Almighty God.

But, Hezekiah **lived** before God and **walked** before God in a way that was pleasing **to** God. Everything that ever happened to Hezekiah was because of God’s grace. His life was lived that way, and when he got sick with a sickness unto death, God in His grace extended his life...

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But one day God didn't grant Hezekiah any more years... and we're going to see at the end of this chapter that God's grace was with him when he **did** die.

We can live and die under the judgment of God or we can live and die under the grace of God...and I pray that each person in this room is saved by His grace. If we are, then we are living by His grace and will die with His grace upon us and will be received into His presence in His grace.

In the time we have left, let's look at the rest of this chapter...

Verses 12-15...

One of the things that lets me know the Bible really is the Word of God and not a fairy tale is that it tells us the truth about its heroes.

For instance, we know the truth about **Abraham's lying** about Sarah's being his sister and not his wife.

And we know the truth about **Noah and his drunkenness** after the flood.

We know the awful truth about **David and his adultery** with Bathsheba and his getting rid of her husband.

We know the truth about **Elijah** running and hiding from Jezebel and saying, "God, I'm the only one you've got left. There's not anybody else like me in all the world."

We know the truth about **Peter** denying that he even knew the Lord Jesus Christ...not once, but three times!

And we know that even the great apostle **Paul** refers to himself as "the chiefest of sinners."

And we could go on and on...but the bottom line is that God lets us know that all of His men, saved men, good men, godly men, holy men, faithful men are still **just men**.

Just because we are Christians doesn't mean that we aren't insulated or isolated from sin. We're not insulated from sin being committed **against** us and we're not insulated from sinning against others and God!

As long as we walk in the Spirit, then we'll live a life that will honor and glorify God, but when we turn away, and walk according to the world, then we open ourselves to any and all sin.

Here's Hezekiah, a man who has had a prayer answered by God's giving him an extra fifteen years of life and not only that but God also threw the progression of time in reverse just to give him assurance that He had done that.

Now, think about this a minute. What's the average man going to think about this? I'll tell you what the average man is going to think...he's going to think, "**Well, I must really be somebody! God must really think I'm great...**"

And this passage doesn't tell us anything about this, but **2 Chronicles 32** does.

"In those Hezekiah became mortally ill; and he prayed to

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the LORD, and the LORD spoke to him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because **his heart was proud...**"

It says he "gave no return for the benefit he received..." What does that mean? He didn't say, "Oh, God, thank you for my healing and I'm so grateful to you for the sign." He didn't say, "Oh, Lord, I just want to praise you and lift your name on high for all the good things you have done for me."

I believe the sin that creeps up on **all** of us is the sin of pride. And God hates it so. There are seven deadly sins listed in the book of **Proverbs** and one of them is a proud look.

God hates pride. And that's what we see in Hezekiah's life right here. He failed to recognize the **grace** of God, the **goodness** of God. He failed to thank God for what He had done. And then he began to think, "**Well, I really kind of deserve this...or God wouldn't have done it!**"

And we see this fleshed out in his life as he showed the messengers from the king of Babylon all that he possessed.

2 Chronicles 32:27-31...

Many times, after a mountain top experience, God gives us a test. And this is exactly what He did with Hezekiah. He gave him a "heart test." And I believe this was to let Hezekiah know what was in his heart. God knows the very thoughts and intents of our heart, but many times He wants to reveal to **us** that those thoughts and intents are ugly and He gives us a pop test!

And when God gave Hezekiah this test, Hezekiah flunked it! I mean, here are people Hezekiah hasn't met, total strangers, and they come and say, "Here's a present for you. Now we want to see your treasures." And you know what? Hezekiah shows all his treasures to them!

Remember what we just read... "**...and God left him alone to test him...**"

2 Kings 20:13... "...there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them."

Listen, the Assyrians were trying to overcome the Babylonians, and the Babylonians were trying to overcome the Assyrians...and they would both like to overcome Judah...and the reason the king of Babylon sent these presents down to Hezekiah was not just a good will gesture.

No, he was wanting to ally himself with Judah who served a God who could slay 185,000 of the enemy overnight and could make time go backwards...until such time as he comes in and takes Judah over!

So, these messengers saw what they wanted to see and then they left!

God put Hezekiah to the test and Hezekiah failed the test. And in the process of failing the test, Hezekiah missed a couple of great opportunities.

Hezekiah missed the opportunity to give a personal testimony of Jehovah's power in delivering his people from the Assyrian army.

And Hezekiah missed the opportunity to give a personal testimony of Jehovah's power to make the sun that the Babylonians worshiped by the way, go back ten steps. I mean, shouldn't

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Hezekiah have pointed out to these folks that they should be worshiping the Creator of the sun instead of the sun?

But, Hezekiah missed these opportunities to speak for His God, didn't he?

Remember that God had called the children of Israel to be a light to the nations around them!

Instead of sharing with these folks what his God had done, he shared with these folks what he possessed.

Instead of sharing a knowledge of his and his nation's spiritual possessions, he shared a knowledge of his and his nation's material possessions.

Hezekiah should have never invited these men to see any of the treasures with which God had so blessed him.

Matthew Henry: "It will be to little purpose to pray that God will not lead us into temptation, if we presumptuously rush into it of our own accord."

Well, Isaiah came in and said, "What did you show these men, Hezekiah?"

Verses 16-21...

Isaiah told Hezekiah what would happen to Judah and we know that it took one hundred years, but in one hundred years it did happen and we're going to see it happen in a couple of weeks!

And Hezekiah said a very interesting thing...

Verse 19...

On the surface you and I don't like what Hezekiah said, do we? But, let me read to you a verse that **2 Chronicles 32** has that this chapter in **2 Kings** doesn't have.

"...Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah."

And I think when we think about the repentance of Hezekiah, then we won't be so hard on him. I believe Hezekiah is saying what you and I say who believe Jesus will come and get us before the Tribulation. We would say, "I know it's going to happen, Lord. You said it will happen. I'm just so grateful that I'm not going to be in the midst of it!"

And I believe Hezekiah was saying, "I know every word the Lord speaks is good. He has said judgment is coming on Judah and I believe every word He speaks. I'm just grateful I'm not going to be in the midst of this judgment."

King Hezekiah was a king who made mistakes. He was a king who loved the approval of the world and he sought this approval more than once. But, he had a heart for the Lord. He had a teachable spirit. And he had a repentant spirit

*And **2 Chronicles** tells us that when he died, he "slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death."*

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I'm so glad God forgives our sin. I'm so glad He has given us hearts that fear Him and He brings conviction to our spirits and that conviction causes us to repent of our sins. I'm so glad God teaches us through the lives of His children who lived so long ago.

I'm so grateful to God that He sent His Son that you and I might know Him and be reconciled to Him and live with Him in eternity.

One hundred years more will pass before this judgment will come to Judah. In the two weeks that we have left in this month we'll see that judgment come.

Next week we'll see two kings who represent to us one of the greatest contrasts in lifestyles and leadership that we see in the entire Word of God. Please study...Manasseh and Josiah!