

Hezekiah, the Sequel

In our first treatise of Hezekiah's story we pretty much followed his story in 2 Kings 18 and 19 and we filled in with passages from 2 Chron. This time we're going to go back and forth between 2 Kings 20, 2 Chron 32, and Isaiah 38. I am going to paraphrase and condense as much of the story as I can.

As I go through the story I'm going to focus on a few lessons that hopefully will be helpful to all of us. And as in the first treatise there will not be time for all the lessons.

We're going to pick up the story in 2 Kings 20. The first thing I learned is that the story became less and less chronological. For example, 2 Kings chapter 20 starts out this way: "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

Hezekiah prays to the LORD about this and the LORD grants him fifteen more years of life. Now if we didn't look into this a little bit, we might think that the story just continues on after the end of chapter 19. But Verse 6 of chapter 20 tells us that the LORD is going to save Hezekiah and Jerusalem out of the hands of the Assyrians. Now we realize the time frame. We have gone back to fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign found in 2 Kings 18:13, which is when Sennacherib's army was attacking Judah.

We also learn in chapter 19 verse 36 that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, returned to Nineveh and dwelt there after he was unable to capture Jerusalem. Some commentaries figure his stay in Nineveh was about five years, based on Assyrian historical records. So we see that the story jumps back several years.

And it kind of stays like that in 2 Kings 20, 2 Chron 32 and Isa 38, the events sort of jump around a bit in time. But, the lessons are there and that's what is important. So Isaiah tells Hezekiah that he is going to die and that he needs to get his house in order. What does that mean?

At this time Hezekiah did not have a son and therefore no successor to his throne. Remember that he was given 15 more years to live and his son Manasseh was 12 when he took the throne, so Manasseh at this time was still 3 years from being born.

It was very important to Israelites back then to "set their house in order," or as Leeser puts it "give charge of his house." This was done by giving the

largest portion of the inheritance to the first-born son who became head of the family when the father died. But in this case, the inheritance was the throne of Judah, which would go to the first-born son.

In verse 3, still in chapter 20, Hezekiah prays to the LORD about what is happening to him and it says, “he wept sore,” or as the margin renders it “he wept with great weeping.” Josephus says that the reason he wept so sorely was because being childless, he was leaving the kingdom without a successor. I like that thought.

Hezekiah loved Judah and in fact he loved all of Israel. I think his chief concern here was for Israel, but, as we will find out, he was also somewhat concerned for himself.

I would like to consider Isa 38:9-22. This passage is called a “writing of Hezekiah after his illness and recovery.”

If we examine Hezekiah’s writing we learn a lot about his heart and what was important to him. What is called “Hezekiah’s writing,” in verse 9 is actually excerpts from two prayers. Or maybe it is the two prayers in their entirety. The first prayer is that which Hezekiah uttered in 2 Kings 20:3, where we get the condensed version of the prayer, just one sentence. But he also records for us a later thankful prayer when he learns shortly afterwards that the LORD is going to extend his life 15 years.

Because this passage is so special to me with so many lessons, I am going to read it in its entirety from the NIV Study Bible and then we will go back and see if we can extract some lessons from it. Isa 38:9 through 22:

“A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery: I said, In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years? I said, I will not again see the LORD, in the land of the living; No longer will I look on mankind, or be with those who now dwell in this world. Like a shepherd’s tent my house has been pulled down and taken from me. Like a weaver I have rolled up my life, and he has cut me off from the loom; day and night you made and end of me.

I waited patiently till dawn but like a lion he broke all my bones; day and night you make an end of me. I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; Oh LORD, come to my aid! But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this. I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul. LORD, by such things men live; and my spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live. Surely it

was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.

For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.

The living, the living – they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell your children about your faithfulness. The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instrument all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD.

Isaiah had said, Prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boil, and he will recover. Hezekiah had asked, What will be the sign that I will go up to the temple of the LORD?”

And that’s the writing of King Hezekiah after he had been sick and recovered. And there are some interesting things in it.

First, he says that in the prime of his life he is “deprived of the residue of his years,” (as Leeser puts it). He didn’t want to die. He loved life. He, of course, did not have the promise of a heavenly resurrection as the church does now. But shouldn’t we also love this human life that God gave us? Life is precious. We appreciate it. We love it. That’s one reason it is so hard to sacrifice. The scripture says to “Love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Hezekiah continues, “I will not again see the LORD, in the land of the living; no longer will I look on mankind, or be with those who now dwell in this world.” He was, as Josephus tells us, also concerned for Israel. He wanted to witness God’s glory revealed in Israel. He loved God’s chosen people and was saddened by the thought of never seeing them again. Sometimes we are torn with a similar concept. We long to be with our Heavenly Father but we would be sad to leave our brethren and families behind, we love them, they are gifts from God.

Verse 14: “I am troubled; Oh LORD, come to my aid!” He acknowledges that he was troubled, and he asks the LORD to help him. Don’t be afraid to do that. What I mean by that is cast all your troubles to the LORD. And remember your anguish is part of the trouble as well as whatever is causing the anguish. In other words don’t feel guilty about being troubled or being in anguish over a trial you may be having but ask the LORD to come to your aid. I think that sometimes we feel a little guilty because we are not rejoicing in our trials. I think maybe the rejoicing comes later.

I know that Paul says in 2 Cor 4:17, “For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” But he also says in Heb 12:11, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth

joyous, but grievous:” And that is a perfect segue into verse 15 where Hezekiah’s letter continues:

“I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul.” This is good stuff here. Notice that Hezekiah is from henceforth going to walk humbly. Why? Because the LORD delivered him from the trial and gave him fifteen more years of life? No, it says it was because of the anguish of his soul. You see it is the trials that should humble us whether the LORD chooses to deliver us or not. It is the trial that is more precious than gold not the deliverance.

Verse 16: “LORD, by such things men live.” This reminds us of 1 Cor 10:13. From the Diaglott, “No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man...” What was happening to Hezekiah at this time was no different than things that had happened to other men. Myriads of men have faced having their life cut short. The difference being that we, like Hezekiah, should learn from our trials and yield up the peaceable fruit of righteousness and walk more humbly with our God. He continues:

“You restored me to health and let me live.” Notice that it is his health that he is thankful to have back – not his wealth. What is really important to us? Our temporal wealth or our spiritual health? We know from 2 Kings 18:14 & 15 what was important to Hezekiah. The King James reads, “return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear... And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king’s house.” Hezekiah’s people and the nation of Judah were more important to him than all his earthly treasures. How about us? Are the LORD’s people, the brethren, more important to us than our earthly treasures?

Verse 17, and this, to me, is the key thought. “Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish.” This thought was so good that Hezekiah repeated it. He was thanking the LORD for his deliverance BUT he also acknowledged that the anguish he suffered through the trial was for his benefit.

Brethren, how often do we thank the LORD for delivering us from a trial? Every time? Of course we do. This is a good thing. But how often do we wholeheartedly thank the LORD for the trial itself and the anguish that comes upon us during the trial, knowing that what ever the trial may be, it is ultimately for our good?

There is a principle demonstrated here in verse 17 that should be ingrained in our hearts. We need to recognize continually that our trials are more precious than gold. And I do understand that it is really easy to say - but it is really tough to totally understand.

This line of thought, that our trials are more precious than gold, seems to be contrary to what Christendom is teaching these days. If you have seen a television evangelist lately you know what I am talking about. The whole focus of their ministries seems to be that God will take away your trials and your anguish through miraculous means, if you just have faith. All the rejoicing seems to come because of the healing and the dismissal of the anguish. Halleluiah, what a Savior! Is their cry. But I think they are missing the point. According to the scriptures that I read, the trials themselves are more precious than gold and we should wait on the LORD and leave it in His hands whether or not we should be miraculously healed. And if we are not, it's okay -- it was the LORD's will.

Peter teaches us that principle directly in 1 Pet 1:6 and 7. Reading from the King James Version: "...ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Notice that he says ye are in heaviness because of the temptations. The word heaviness means distress or sadness. A good synonym would be "anguish." The word temptation in the text means "a putting to proof," or "experience," and by implication "adversity." It is Strong's #3986. The word trial is #1383 and it means "testing." It's like Peter is saying here that your experience and your distress over the experience together are the trial. I believe he is saying the anguish you go through during an experience is part of the trial. And those trials are more precious than gold. Hezekiah seemed to come to that same conclusion in his writing when he says, "Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish."

Why is the trial of your faith more precious than gold? The answer is found in the text. Because it is helping you to be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Gold isn't even in the same ballpark as trials. All gold can do is buy you temporal things. Some have tried to buy spiritual things with money – and failed. Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:19 wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit with money and was rebuked emphatically by Peter. And rightly so.

Heb 12:11 NIV says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.” Your trials are painful! Sometimes it’s emotional distress, anguish, sometimes it’s physical – sometimes it’s both. Our loving Heavenly Father knows your trials are painful. And in Heb 10:12 he says, “...but God disciplines us for our good.” Why? “That we may share in His holiness.”

It’s okay to acknowledge your trials, your anguish, your pain, and take it to the LORD -- BUT we must take the next step. We must realize that the trials we endure are:

- 1.) For our good!
- 2.) Supposed to yield up the peaceable fruit of righteousness and,
- 3.) More precious than gold. The scripture says, “more precious than gold that perishes.” Gold is temporal, our new creatures are spiritual -- different ballpark.

Verse 19: “The living, the living – they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell your children about your faithfulness.

The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instrument all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD.”

Oh brethren, as you live in God’s word, as you worship Him in Spirit and truth make sure you praise His name. As you live in God’s truth tell your children, let them see you praising God. As we go about our daily business we are still in the temple of the Living God, are we not? Praise God with song, make a joyful noise unto the LORD. Now, that advice isn’t very practical when we are, say, at work. But you know, the LORD can hear that joyful noise even if it is just in your heart. And when you have a song in your heart and you are praising His name in your heart, you will radiate God’s love wherever you are.

These were just some of the lessons that I got from Hezekiah’s recording of his prayers.

But you know, as good a king as he was, Hezekiah was not perfect.

We learn in 2 Chron 32:25 that pride entered his heart. After all the LORD had done for him and his country, how could he become prideful? The verse reads this way in the NIV Study Bible: “But Hezekiah’s heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him, therefore the LORD’s wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.”

Pride is such a nasty thing. What could cause pride to come into this faithful servant of the LORD? Here are some possibilities:

1.) He was king. Just the very position of being king would lend itself to making one prideful, wouldn't it? A king is the chief among every single person in the kingdom. Everyone is subordinate to the king. That kind of power weighs on the human mind. And with help from Satan, the powerful often become the power drunk, which is a prideful condition. And not only was Hezekiah the chief among all Judah, 2 Chron 32:23 says, "And many brought gifts unto the LORD of Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from henceforth." Talk about a breeding ground for pride. Do you think that we should be extra careful knowing that we are Kings and Priests in training?

2.) Hezekiah had built up storehouses of riches. In 2 Chron 32:27-29 we learn how vast his treasury was. And in 2 Kings 20:13 he seems to be quite proud of it. It says that when the ambassadors from Babylon came to see him, Hezekiah showed them "...all that was in his storehouses and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not."

Some commentaries feel that Hezekiah was visited by an ambassador of Babylon, because they wanted to form an alliance against Assyria. And that does make a lot of sense. I still think it was prideful of Hezekiah to show all that he had. He did not need to bolster his position with Babylon. After all they sought him out; he turned away Sennacherib's army. They knew he had something going for him. Are we sometimes prideful of our earthly treasures? Are we ever proud of our knowledge of the truth and sometimes cast our pearls before swine just to show-off, or make ourselves feel good that we know so much, rather than humbly witnessing to God's great truth and His love for all mankind?

3.) Turning away a powerful nation like Assyria could cause any king to be puffed up. Do we ever swell with pride for some great task we have preformed on behalf of the LORD and His Truth? Is it possible to sometimes forget that without God's help we could do nothing of value?

4.) Maybe he became prideful because God healed him after his prayer. We get a little hint of this in 2 Kings 20:8-11. This text comes just after Hezekiah is told that he is going to die, then he prays about it and Isaiah tells him that the LORD is going to give him fifteen more years. And then verse 8 says, "And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, what shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?"

As we might say today, that took a lot of guts. Think about it, after all the LORD had done for him and Jerusalem he had the audacity to ask for a sign

that what God promised he would deliver! Hadn't God delivered every time before? And not only that, but in verse 9 Isaiah tells him that the sign would be that "the shadow shall go forward ten degrees" and in verse 10 Hezekiah tells Isaiah that "the shadow going forward would be an easy thing, so let it go backwards." Can you believe this? When I was a youngster if my behavior was like Hezekiah's in this type of situation, my father would have said to me "you're getting just a little too big for your britches." And this is what it sounds like is happening to Hezekiah here. One of the signs that pride has entered into someone's heart is questioning authority. Pride had gotten to the point where Hezekiah was questioning God's promises. Unbelievable.

5.) Maybe he started to feel a little too special because of what we read in 2 Chronicles 31:20 & 21. "And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the houses of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart," (good so far, but then it says) "and prospered."

Brethren, can this happen to us? Is it possible that we could see many or even a few people come to the LORD through our witnessing efforts, either personal or public? It is possible. We know this because we have witnessed such events since Brother Russell began his ministry. We are seeing it now in India, many people coming into the Truth.

Be careful my friends because Satan is there waiting for you. He is ready, willing, able, and eager to inject pride into your heart for anything good that you may accomplish in the LORD's service. Humble yourselves before the mighty hand of God; don't question God's promises as Hezekiah did.

So, we've learned that good King Hezekiah was not good all the time and he was not perfect. He became prideful. Did he ever change back to the good old Hezekiah that "trusted God so that none was like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him," as was stated in 2 Kings 18:5?

Well, in 2 Chron 32:25 we read that pride had entered Hezekiah's heart and he was lifted up. But immediately following in verse 26 we read, "Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

Now here is what I was talking about earlier. Things are not in exact chronological order in this story. It sounds like Hezekiah became prideful and immediately became humble again. Not at all. It doesn't work that way. I think, in accordance with the writer's style, that Hezekiah had some experiences between verses 25 and 26 that helped him lose his pride. I believe that the writer tells us the beginning and the end of this situation and then goes back and fills in the details.

We learn in verse 31 how he was brought back, so to speak, from such a prideful condition. I think this verse is one of the greatest lessons we can get from the life of Hezekiah. It reads this way, 2 Chron 32:31: "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

We would like to take a closer look at this text. First we would like to investigate how it was that "the ambassadors of Babylon inquired about the wonder that was done in the land." I don't believe this refers to Hezekiah restoring the temple and the Jewish traditions of Judah and parts of Israel. That would not have been considered a wonder by the Babylonians. No, what is being referred to here is the turning away of Sennacherib's Assyrian army when it was at the very gates of Jerusalem. This must have seemed like an impossible, wondrous miracle to the Babylonians. They had watched as the Assyrian army had crushed nation after nation as well as the northern part of Israel, then called Samaria, and even all the fortified cities of Judah. They would have no idea that it was indeed a miracle from the one true God.

God saw the pride growing in Hezekiah's heart after the Assyrians were turned away and it grew to the point where he questioned God's promise of healing him on the third day. So how does God handle a situation like this with one who has been as faithful as Hezekiah? Well, the text says that "God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." This is a principle that God has used since the beginning of man.

It started in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve gave in to the temptations of Satan and ate the forbidden fruit. Essentially they were questioning God's authority. What happened? God, in essence, left them when He cursed the ground and made them leave the garden. Did they learn all that was in their hearts? Well, mankind is still working on that one. It has been a long and painful process but one day mankind, Adam and his offspring, will figure it out and eventually they will know that evil has been in their hearts all through the Present Evil World and they will turn to the one true God.

But in the meantime whom has mankind had to deal with? Satan. God allowed Satan to become the “God of this world” and “the prince of the power of the air.” (2 Cor 4:4 and Eph 2:2). So when God leaves someone as He did Hezekiah, who is there to take over the authoritative position? There is only one answer – Satan. Satan is always there waiting for you and me to reject God, or to doubt God, or to question God’s authority, or just wander off the narrow way for a while. I don’t know about you but this sounds a bit scary to me. But our loving Heavenly Father can use this time to your advantage.

Remember what 2 Chron 32:31 says: “God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” There was a reason why God left Hezekiah. He was supposed to learn some lessons from the experience.

I think what is interesting here is that God left Hezekiah, that Hezekiah might learn what was in his own heart. God didn’t leave him so He could take some time to evaluate what was in Hezekiah’s heart. God knew what was in his heart. God knows what is in your heart. We have our experiences so that we can learn the evil that is in our own hearts. And once we learn it then we can start working on rectifying it. And one of the ways we do this is by coming humbly to the LORD, confessing that we have sinned, admitting that we have seen the error of our ways, and then ask for His help. It’s really kind of a neat system.

We are imperfect; we live in an imperfect world that is ruled by Satan. Because of this we don’t always know what is right and what is wrong. Prov 14:12 and 16:25 say, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” As Christians we need to sort out which things are right according to men and which things are right according to God. The world, the flesh, and the devil are constantly trying to influence us to accept the ways of the world as being the right way or even the “okay” way. If we are honest and pure in heart and striving to do God’s will, sometimes God leaves us to experience the wrong ways of the world and its leader so that we will be certain that God’s way is the right way. We must be rightly exercised from these experiences and they must ultimately lead us back to God.

We have an example of how this literally works in I Tim 1:20 and 2 Tim 2:17. In these texts there are three characters whose consecrated lives were heading in the wrong direction. I Tim 1:19 & 20 says, “Some having rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.” And in 2 Tim 2:16 & 17 we read, “Avoid godless chatter,

because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teachings will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the Truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some.”

These brethren had not just wandered away from the Truth but were teaching others their error thus pulling them away from the faith as well. This was evidently a serious matter because we find in 2 Tim 4:14, “Alexander the metalworker did me (Paul) a great deal of harm.” We don’t know what this harm was but it was serious enough to mention in Paul’s letter to Timothy.

So these brethren were turned over to Satan for their evil ways. Why? To punish them? No, 1 Tim 1:20 says, “so that they would be taught not to blaspheme.” This method of leaving one to himself, which will ultimately leave one to Satan, is a teaching tool. You see, these were consecrated brethren whom God loved and was willing to help. It had gotten to the point where they had to find out for themselves what was truly in their hearts by being turned over to Satan or left to themselves, as it were. Did it work? Well, we have no record of it. We just don’t know. But the same method that God used with Hezekiah was used with these brethren in the New Testament. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. What we do know is that this method of bringing someone back into the fold is a tool God uses because He loves us.

Paul also mentions this principle in 1 Cor 5:5, which says, “...hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the LORD.” I believe that his spirit here refers to his new creature. That is what God is interested in saving in Christians. Their flesh they will give up, it will not be salvaged.

So here is a principle that was used by God to get Hezekiah to know that what was in his own heart was pride. The way the system works is that Hezekiah would recognize the pride and come to the LORD for repentance. Did it work? The story tells us that it did. 2 Chron 32:26 says that “Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart.” So what actually happened to Hezekiah during the time that he “was left to himself?”

We have to go back to 2 Kings Chapter 20 to find at least part of the answer. First Hezekiah pridefully shows all of the treasures to the son of the Babylonian king. Then in verse 14 Hezekiah’s old friend and mentor, Isaiah the prophet, comes onto the scene again. He questions Hezekiah about the

men who saw the treasury. Where they were from and how much they had seen.

At this point Hezekiah could have said, *“Hey, I am the king here and I’ll do as I please. I will show whomever I might the riches of Judah.”* But he didn’t do that. Instead he chose to listen to Isaiah. We know that Hezekiah was rightly exercised by being “left to himself.” He records it for us in his writings of his prayers that we have already considered. In Isa 38:20 he writes, “The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD.” Verse 17 says, “Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction, you have put all my sins behind your back.”

The system worked. He got it. He not only learned from the anguish he suffered from being left to himself but he actually thanked God for the anguish. He thanked God for the learning experience. He thanked God because he learned that it was his experience with anguish that ultimately kept him from the pit of destruction.

In the big picture, the world of mankind will indeed thank and praise our Heavenly Father for the permission of evil, which has been in existence from the time Adam was expelled from the garden. All the anguish suffered by mankind because they were left to themselves in a world where Satan rules, will serve a marvelous lesson in the millennial age and beyond. Mankind will eventually realize that the permission of evil was for their own good.

What about us? Are we rightly exercised when we feel the anguish of being “left to ourselves?” Do we listen to our mentors in the Truth who tell us like it is? Do we realize long before the world of mankind does that the anguish we feel in our trials is actually for our good? Hezekiah did. Apparently Alexander did not. I don’t believe that Paul would have written in 2 Tim 4:14 that Alexander did him a great deal of harm, if Alexander had been rightly exercised by being turned over to Satan. But that’s just my opinion.

We learn from all of this that if we stray, if we become prideful, that all hope is not gone. God will leave us to ourselves so that we can understand our own hearts and come back to God’s loving arms for help. It should be an encouragement for us to learn about Hezekiah and his fall from humility and his subsequent return to it. I know it encourages me. The LORD allows us to make mistakes. And He has set up a method by which we can realize our mistakes and imperfections and overcome them.

After he questions Hezekiah about what he had been doing and whom he had been showing treasures to, Isaiah then tells Hezekiah the bad news. 2 Kings 20:17 & 18 reads, “Behold the days come that all that is in thine house and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.”

This had to be a bitter pill for Hezekiah to swallow because he loved Judah so much. But he had returned to trusting the LORD and realized that it would be okay.

It seems here that this is some sort of punishment that will come upon Judah because Hezekiah showed the son of the Babylonian king all the riches in the treasury. This seems likely and we read that Hezekiah accepted that edict which was given to him through Isaiah. But I think there may be another lesson we can learn here.

Remember back when Isaiah gave Hezekiah the news that he was going to die? Remember that Hezekiah wept sorely? Josephus said it was because Judah had no successor to the throne at that time and that bothered Hezekiah immensely. At that time we started to see that Hezekiah’s faith in the LORD was waning a bit. He should have trusted that God would take care of the matter. How often do our wishes when granted prove to be curses?

I ask that because as it turned out Hezekiah did have a son three years after his prayer. His son, Manasseh, proved to be an evil king. 2 Kings 21:2 - 4 says, “And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up alters for Baal and made a grove, as did Ahab the king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.” And the list goes on. Here’s a quote from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary: “Hezekiah lived to have a son; that son was the idolater Manasseh, the chief cause of God’s wrath against Judah, and the overthrow of the kingdom. (2 Kings 23:26 & 27)

It’s almost like when the Israelites got tired of eating manna and prayed for meat. The quails were sent and many of them got sick. I guess the principle here is to be careful what you pray for because you just might get it.

During his time of stress when he learned that he was going to die soon, Hezekiah forgot one little detail. God is in charge. Do we ever do this? Do we ever pray for something that the LORD already had under control? It is very easy to do.

Many years ago I learned a wonderful lesson from an elderly sister in our class. Her son was dying and my heart went out to her. Her name was Sr Elsie Kuenzi and she and I talked about the situation. I was fairly new in the narrow way and asked her about praying for her son. She was firm in her conviction that she would pray for the strength for him and her both to get through the trial but she would not pray for him to be healed. I continued to question her about that and she very lovingly said, "What if I prayed for him to be healed and the LORD said yes. And then later on he might have to endure a tougher trial with more pain and anguish. How would I feel?" She told me that if it was the LORD's will that her son be healed then he would be. She said she would continue to pray for the LORD's will to be done. I appreciate that conversation to this very day.

Hezekiah should not have worried about the successor to the throne of Judah. The LORD would have taken care of it. We need not worry about things in our life that we have no control over. The LORD is watching out for our well-being and He will take care of matters in the best possible way. In a way that will be for our eternal well being, not what is best for the flesh.

Hezekiah seems to get the point in 2 Kings 20:19 after he has heard what will happen to his house in the future. He says, "Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken." And he said, "is it not good if peace and truth be in my days?"

I think this is more of an acceptance speech and not one of complaining about future events. He is thankful to the LORD for the peace that will abide in his kingdom the rest of his days and accepts what the LORD has in store for Judah in the future.

Brethren, we are in the same situation. This earthly kingdom that we are sojourning in is going to suffer a time of trouble that never has been nor ever shall be. Aren't we glad that we are living in a time when we can receive the Truth and our new creatures can live in God's peace, which passeth all human understanding? Or would we rather be living in the great time of trouble? That dark time when no man can work? That time when the door is closed? I am thankful that I can follow the LORD now.

I am also thankful for the story of Hezekiah. There are so many good lessons that I have learned from studying his life. And there are even more that we didn't have time for.

Hezekiah had stumbled but did indeed come back to the LORD. It is my prayer for all of us, even though we may stumble occasionally, that it may

be written of us at the end of our course, that which was written of Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32:32, “Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his goodness, behold they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.” Indeed for us it is the Book of Life.

May the LORD add His blessing.

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