

Title: Hezekiah's Trial of Sickness

Text: Isaiah 38: 1-22

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We have seen in three messages, how the Lord sent a trial to Hezekiah, taught him through it. One, the Lord taught him to return to the Lord and wait on him in faith and in prayer casting all our care on the Lord. Two, the Lord taught him that Christ is our covert from the storm; Hezekiah experienced the Lord's faithfulness. Three, the Lord taught Hezekiah the importance of hearing the gospel of the Lord; it was through Isaiah preaching the word of the Lord that the Lord strengthened Hezekiah's faith in the Lord and brought Hezekiah through the trial. But before the Lord delivered Hezekiah out of the trial with the Assyrians, the Lord sent Hezekiah another trial.

Isaiah 38: 1: In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

I remind you again the Lord sent these trials while Hezekiah was doing a good work of faith. Hezekiah was restoring true worship to Judah.

SOME THINGS TO FORGET

Isaiah 38: 2: Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, 3: And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, [a sincere heart] and have done *that which is good in thy sight*. And Hezekiah wept sore.

There are some vain things preachers have taught that every believer needs to forget.

One, forget this vain notion that *every* trial the Lord sends is due to us being unfaithful to the Lord. That is what Job's friends came declaring to Job as he suffered that severe trial. Yet, in both these trials, Hezekiah was obeying the word of the Lord in faith. So was Job.

Two, forget this vain notion that a faithful believer will not face many trials in our life. Hezekiah was a faithful believer. When he got this news Hezekiah asked the Lord to remember his faithfulness to the Lord, "*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 [sincere heart] and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.*" Hezekiah is not exalting himself; he knew his faith and his walk was only due to God's grace. He knew he was a sinner. Hezekiah is simply asking God to remember that, however imperfect his faith and service to God was, he truly believed the Lord and walked before him with a sincere heart. The Lord himself declared of Hezekiah

2 Kings 18: 5: He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

Yet, back-to-back—even while Hezekiah is in the trial with the Assyrians, God sent Hezekiah another severe trial. So, yes, God sends trials to faithful believers. In fact, if you consider Moses, David, Hezekiah, the apostle Paul—these are the most blessed, the most faithful, the most used of the Lord in all of scripture—and they also suffered the most trials. So forget this vain notion that a faithful believer will not face trials. The Lord Jesus said to every believer,

John 16: 33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world, ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Revelation 2:10: Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days [ye shall be in the trial for a number of days set by God] be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Three, forget this vain notion that the trial proves you are *not* God's child. Every sinner faces trouble. The difference for God's child is that the Spirit of God teaches us through the trial. That is proof you are indeed God's child and loved of God.

Hebrews 12: 6: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7: If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8: But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

ONE PURPOSE

Every trial God sends his child has one preeminent purpose: to turn us from self and this world to trust Christ alone.

Isaiah 38: 10: I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11: I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. 12: Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 13: I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 14: Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

After this trial, Hezekiah wrote down what he was thinking and praying during his sickness. He gives us an honest confession of what he was thinking.

One, the trial is to turn us from self.

Hezekiah tells us how attached he was to this life. *"I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years."* Hezekiah is about 40 years old. He felt like he was being deprived of the residue of his years.

Hezekiah's concern was that he should no more worship the Lord in this life nor behold his brethren and friends any more. *"I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."* Some think Hezekiah is saying, he would not see Christ come into this world. But he would be with Christ if God took him. He would be with his brethren forever in glory in perfection.

Hezekiah attributed his death to his own sin. He thought God was cutting him off due to his sin. *"Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I HAVE CUT OFF like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward."*

Aren't we so attached to this world? If God took Hezekiah then he would enter into glory with our Redeemer! Far better! Yet, he could only think about being cut off from this life. It is like he forgot his sins were put away by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, God's trials are to wean us from this world. They are to set our house in order. When God said, *"Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live"*—it has more to do with these things than anything else. Hezekiah's priorities were out of order. His heart and affections were taken up with this life.

Two, the trial is to turn us to trust Christ alone.

Through the trials, God blesses us to set our house in order. The margin says, "Give the charge of your house to someone else, for ye shall die and not live." God turns us from things below to Christ alone! Here is where the Lord brought Hezekiah, to the end of self, *"O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me."*

Now, his house is in order. Now his priorities are in order. He looked to the LORD alone! Hezekiah saw his inability to bear up under this oppressive weight. He committed the charge of his house to Christ. He asked the Lord, “*Undertake for me! Be Surety for me! Lord, save me!*”

Brethren, that is the end purpose of every trial. This is the end to which the Lord always brings his child. He turn us from self, from this world and bring us to the feet of Christ! “*O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me!*”

ANSWERED PRAYER

We know this is the end purpose of the trial because when he asked the Lord to undertake, the Lord heard him and answered his prayer. We know the end of the trial is to bring us to Christ’s feet because Christ delights to show mercy. When Hezekiah was brought to cast it all into Christ’s hand the Lord answered his prayer.

Isaiah 38: 4: Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, 5: 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. 6: And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7: And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; 8: 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....21: For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22: Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

We are told in 2 Kings 20: 4 this “*came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him.*” The margin says before Isaiah got to the middle part of the city of Jerusalem. Sometimes the Lord waits a long time in the trial, sometimes he works within hours.

The Lord heard Hezekiah beg the Lord to undertake for him. In 2 Kings 20, when Hezekiah asked a sign the Lord gave Hezekiah the choice of making the sun return or go forward. Hezekiah said, “return the sun 10 degrees.” That is what the Lord did for Hezekiah. The Lord turned back time. He gave Hezekiah life. Christ is the Life of all who call upon him to undertake.

LESSONS LEARNED IN TRIAL

Isaiah 38: 15: What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. 16: O Lord, by these *things men* live, and in all these *things is* the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. 17: Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. 18: For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19: The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. 20: The LORD *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

Let’s hear Hezekiah declare what the Lord taught him through this trial.

One, the Lord taught him to pass through this life with a loose grip on everything here below, ready to depart at any time. “*What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.*” He acknowledged God did this. I will go softly all my years in bitterness of my soul, remembering this bitterness of my soul: my hastiness, my inordinate affection for this world, how I acted like one never heard that salvation is of the Lord. I will go through my life remembering Christ is my life and not this world.

Two, he learned his need for the Lord to send such trials. “*O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.*” Hezekiah praised God for sending him this bitter trial. By it, the Lord recovered him from the cares of his world and made him live

upon the word of the Lord. The trials only sweep away that which can be moved. They only sweep away the chaff. They separate the vile from the precious in our hearts.

It is by the word of the Lord that we live: by God precious promises in Christ, by God's grace and mercy to us for the sake of Christ, by God's power and providence he keeps us saving us from ourselves by sending such bitter trials. "So wilt thou recover me and make me live!"

You have heard me say how that we look back on trials and we are so thankful the Lord sent them. He used it to turn us to Christ and save us. That is what Hezekiah is saying!

I marvel at God's providence. The first time I preached from this passage was in 2011. The illustration I used to show why God sends trials was how I had just stripped way ivy from a big oak tree at the back of my grandmother's house. It did not kill the tree, it made it thrive. It is amazing to me that I came to this passage this week because a few weeks ago I was just home and stripped away that ivy again. Brethren, we need the Lord to repeatedly send trials to strip away the ivy that he might make us live upon him alone!

Three, Hezekiah was renewed to remember that God in Christ had put away all his sin and given him eternal life. "*Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day...*" When God first called us, he worked this same work. He made us see our sin and weep bitterly. God made us see WE ARE THE PIT OF CORRUPTION. Then he made us behold that in love God our Father in his Son Jesus Christ has delivered all his elect—us personally—from the pit of corruption and cast all our sins behind his back.

Hezekiah is type of Christ. Christ conquered the king of Assyria—the devil. He did it by bearing all the sickness of his people—all our sins. Christ bore the fury of God's wrath. By that Christ turned back the sun. He restored life to his people, God's elect.

Through this trial, the Lord worked the same work in Hezekiah. That is what he does through these trials. He shows us personally our sin and corruption. The trial is for us personally, God teaches his child personally. He renews us to know that in everlasting love, Christ has delivered us personally from our own selves. He renews us to know that Christ has put away our sins forever. God has cast all our sins behind his back. He remembers them no more!

Four, God does this that we might spread the gospel and declare what Christ has done for us. Thus he brings us to declare this good news to our children. "*The father to the children shall make known thy truth.*" God the Father makes his child know the unsearchable riches of Christ. He renews us to know it again and again through trials so that we go tell others what great things the Lord has done for us. I am declaring this to you today because it is what God worked for me. It is what he is working in the trial for each of you who know him. It is what God shall work for each believer throughout our life.

Five, God keeps us giving all the glory to him alone, praising God our Father and his Son, Christ Jesus. "*The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.*" In Christ alone, we have peace!

Amen!