

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 • Read 2Kings 20:12–21

Questions from the Scripture text: Who sends what two things to Hezekiah in v12? What had he heard? How does Hezekiah respond to the messengers in v13? What five specific things does he show them? What does he refrain from showing? From where? Who goes to Hezekiah in v14? What two things does he ask about the men? Which one of those two things does Hezekiah answer? What is his answer? Then what does Isaiah ask in v15a? How does Hezekiah answer (v15b)? What hadn't Hezekiah asked for, but now receives (v16)? How does the quantity of what v17 addresses correspond to v13, 15b? What will happen to it all? What (whom) else will they take away (v18)? What will happen to them? What does Hezekiah think of this word (v19)? Why—what will there be? When? Where does v20 say one may find what? What did Hezekiah do in v21? Who reigned in his place?

How does mercy overrule believers' pride and folly? 2Kings 20:12–21 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **in those whom He is growing in grace, God commends the goodness that comes from His gracious work, despite the harmfulness of their remaining sin, mercifully sparing much of the harm it might have cost.**

Godly people can make costly mistakes, but they have a merciful God.

Godly people. Hezekiah has enjoyed the fruit of looking to the Lord in prayer (v1–11), and he is a man who can recognize when the Lord is being merciful to him (v19). When we get to his closing formula in v20, we're reminded of how the Lord introduced him in 18:1–18. "He did what was right in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his father David had done" (18:3). "He trusted in Yahweh[...] held fast to Yahweh[...] did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments" (18:5, 6).

Yes, he stumbled in some things, as he does here. But we ought to read his account according to the Spirit's own general assessment. His verdict will affect how we read the Lord's Word in vv17–18 and Hezekiah's response in v19.

And His verdict encourages us, as we walk with the Lord, that although we may make costly mistakes, there is such a thing as imperfect godliness that God commends. This is not because God grades on a curve, but because whenever we find real godliness mixed with believers' sinfulness and imprudence, we know where it came from.

Whatever godliness is there must have come from God Himself. And He is not so unjust as to overlook it, but rather merciful to reward it for the sake of His grace which produced it. Real godliness, though imperfect in the believer, comes from the perfect God. And He is truly pleased with it. And He responds to it in a way that makes a real difference. We will see that difference when we come to consider "A merciful God" below.

Costly mistakes. While this encourages us not to despair over our imperfections, we must nevertheless not grow tolerant of our sin or foolishness. For, these are real and have real consequences. The key to v12 is what came with the "present." The word is a word for "offering" or "tribute," which helps us understand the "letters" in v12 and Hezekiah's behavior in v13.

Apparently, the envoys carried official diplomatic documents offering Hezekiah an alliance with Babylon if Israel was up to snuff. That's why Hezekiah would make sure to show the envoys every last thing that he had (v13) and not be ashamed to tell Isaiah that he had done what he thought was an excellent job of enlisting the most powerful anti-Assyrian ally (v14–15).

But Hezekiah would indubitably have known of Isaiah's teaching about Egypt in Isa 30:1–3, which had corresponded to the situation back in 2Ki 18:19–21. Isa 30:2 zeroed in not on forming the alliance, per se, but that Yahweh was not consulted about it.

That's why v16 must have stopped Hezekiah in his tracks "Hear the word of Yahweh." A second time, the king had run headlong into something without consulting the word of the Lord. Now, we are not kings over Yahweh's people and do not have a prophet of Yahweh assigned to us.

But we do have the completed, sufficient Old and New Testament Scriptures. (cf. Jn 16:12–14; 1Cor 13:8–10; 2Tim 3:14–17). And we do have particular shepherd-teachers assigned to us (cf. Ac 20:28; Heb 13:7–9, 17; Eph 4:11–14). And we have an entire body of Christ who have been assigned specifically to us for our engagement and building up into Christ (cf. 1Cor 12:18, 24–25; Eph 4:15–16;). Shall we make any important decision without refreshing ourselves in the Scriptures that touch it, consulting the undershepherds assigned to us, and keeping ourselves current in our participation in the body?

Though Hezekiah was a godly king, this error was profoundly costly. It will turn out to be the means by which Babylon gains much of its intel for plundering and enslaving Israel (v17–18). Manasseh is the wicked one who irrevocably provokes Yahweh to the judgment of the Babylonian exile (cf. 21:1–18). But Hezekiah's mistake will end up being a big part of how it ends up happening.

The mistakes of the godly have real consequences, and they can be very costly indeed. Let them learn, then, that love to God and brother and neighbor demands walking in wisdom. It demands constant meditation upon God's Word and humbly availing ourselves of the ministry of God's assigned servants. And the godly will also be praying that the Lord will be merciful to spare them, and those under them, from the costliness of their mistakes. For, we will make many of them. But how often, God has softened the brunt of the blow, or even spared the harm altogether. How great is His mercy!

A merciful God. We are so sluggish toward God's mercy that we are unable to see it in v18. After Isaiah 30:1–5, 31:1–3, and how that dalliance with Egypt resulted in the back-breaking, terrifying siege of Assyria (cf. 2Ki 18:9–19:19), Hezekiah has done it again. And now, rather than annihilate Judah immediately, the Lord's response will not come for *at least fifteen years*. Hezekiah's prior reprieve had included deliverance from Assyria (v6), and now it will also include deliverance from Babylon! This is a great mercy. Some are tempted to read the response in v17–18 as severe. But to them Hezekiah might anachronistically quote some now famous words: "what's wrong with you people?!"

To this mercy of reprieve, the Lord adds the mercy of humility—the mercy of sanctified eyes with which to see the mercy in the midst of the judgment. Even after he has done what had previously so provoked God, the Lord comes back with a merciful word. God is good, and this word has been good. Taken in the context of 2Ki 18–20 as a whole, rounded out from the book of Isaiah, v19b is not indifference toward the plight of Hezekiah's sons. Rather, it is an amazement at the mercy of God, even after another offense such as he has just committed. The Lord is always being overwhelmingly merciful to us. O that His Spirit would give us the eyes to see just how great that mercy has been!

And of course, once the mercies that we and the visible church receive in this world, there is an infinitely greater and longer mercy to come for those who are in Christ. In mercy, the Lord gave him a useful life (v20). Man's greatness is small, so the extra details went into a non-Scripture book. But that small greatness comes in God's big mercy. Manasseh is coming (v21), but the final word on a believer is that when he dies the death of the righteous (cf. Num 23:10–11, Ps 116:15–16), he joins the souls of the just made perfect (cf. Heb 12:23; Phlp 3:12; Rev 6:9–11). What a merciful God!

What is your habit of consulting the Scriptures about decisions? What is your habit for consulting the shepherd-teachers and overseers specifically assigned to you? What is your habit for keeping your participation in Christ's earthly body "current"? What are some mistakes that you have made that God has spared you and others the brunt of? When have you been thankful under a difficult providence that was more merciful than you deserved?

Sample prayer: Lord, truly You are merciful to Your people. We, like Hezekiah, are often foolish. We forget the costliness of our past sins and errors. And we stumble right back into the same sin. How often You have given us a reprieve like the 15 years of peace that Judah enjoyed! Forgive us when, under a painful providence, we forget that You are truly sparing us more than we can imagine. And sanctify our hearts to see Your goodness and call it good, we ask, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP1 "How Blessed the Man" or TPH169 "Master, Speak! Thy Servant Heareth"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Second kings chapter 20 verses 12 through 21. These are God's words. At that time, Baroda belladan the son of baladan, king of Babylon. Sent letters and a present to Hezekiah. For you heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them and showed them all the house of his treasures.

The silver and the gold, the spices and precious ointment And all his armory old, that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Than isaiah. The prophet went to king Hezekiah and said to him. What did these men say?

And from where did they come to you? So Hezekiah said they came from a far country. From Babylon. And he said, And what have they seen in your house? So there's a kaya answered, they have seen all that is in my house. There's nothing among my treasures that i've not shown.

Then isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of yahweh. Behold the days are coming.

Behold the days are coming when old that is in your house? And what your fathers have accumulated until this day? Shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says yahweh. And they shall take away some of your sons. Who will descend from you? Whom you will beget. And they shall be unix in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Sozakaya said to Isaiah, The word of yahweh, which you have spoken. Is good. For he said, well they're not be peace and truth at least in my days. Now, the rest of the act of Hezekiah, All his might and how he made a pool. And a tunnel. And brought water into the city.

Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of judah? So Hezekiah arrested with his fathers. Then manasa his son. Range in his place. So far the reading of god's inspired and Inherent word.

The first part of This passage and the mistake that. By the time we're done reading, the passage we realize asikiah has made. Is to us, something of And encouragement. Because we are. Those who also sin and who also make mistakes, And we often repeat the same sins and the same mistakes that we have made before.

And yet. On the hole. We're reminded that Hezekiah was one who turns. To the lord, whom grace has taught. To seek the lord in his trouble. Now, this is how he recovered from the illness that the recovery that The about Paradox balance on a balladin king of Babylon. Has heard about.

Here's one who turns to the lord he is one. Whom the lord has restored and prospered. That's one of the reasons why. There is, there is Silver and gold and spices and precious ointment. And so forth in israel at this time. And we're even reminded in the closing formula.

When it says the rest of the active Hezekiah and all his might etc, And, Uh, we have the closing formula. It reminds us of what god said in the opening formula. There's been more about Hezekiah and second kings, and almost all of the other. Um, Kings, and almost all of the other rains that are covered.

But to remember at the beginning of god's telling us about Hezekiah getting a chapter 18, That he told us how godly Hezekiah was. After all that his father david had done. And he uses language. That sounds even like that about justiah. That there was no one after him or before him, that was Uh, quite like he was And yet he was still fallible.

And we remember at the time that reminded us, To look forward to christ alone as the king and whom we hope. But it encourages us and reminds us that as god graciously works in us. That. Even at a late date of walking with him and this was a late date and as a guy is walking with him.

We may make great mistakes. And yet god's overall assessment to us as according to christ. And according to, Not just, The perfect righteousness of christ that has been counted for us. But that what she has produced in us from the lord jesus. He has an eye to his handiwork.

He sees. The beauty and the goodness. And what he has done in us. And so yes, we back slide as hasakaya did and the word of god confronts us as The word of god did in isaiah. And, Um, We realize the consequences on earth. Of our mistakes of our sins.

Our backslidings. And yet. We may take much comfort and consolation from the fact first of all that christ has attended for us in that he's our righteousness. But second of all, that god's own assessment, Of the life of a An imperfect believer. As according to the good that he has.

Produced in the believer. And so godly people who make mistakes is the first thing that we see here. The second thing we see here, Is the great costliness of the mistakes, even of the godly. Part of the background, excuse me.

Part of the background of what's going on here, and Second kings, 20, we actually have to go to the middle part of isaiah. Isaiah, of course, we Have already even been reminded was the court, prophet the word of god in the royal court during the time of Hezekiah. And back before.

Um, Assyria laid siege to jerusalem. The lord had told. Hezekiah part of the reason that that would happen. And it was because Hezekiah was. Reigning and ruling and leading israel. According to the wisdom of man without seeking the word of god. And that had led him to make an alliance with egic.

Which is one of the reasons that when the rab shaker originally shows up in second kings, One of the things he says to israel to judah. Is how foolish it is. That they think egypt can help them. When the Assyrian king would be glad. To arm them and give them horses and chariots because they don't even have the manpower to use.

What Assyria would give them let alone. What? Egypt could give them? And so that came about because of What Hezekiah had done and we here in isaiah 30. Wow. To the rebellious children says yahweh. Who take counsel but not of me. Who devised plans. But not on my spirit.

So that they may add sin to sin who walk down to eject and have not asked my advice. To strengthen themselves and the strength of pharaoh. And to trust in

the shadow of egypt. And then chapter 31, in the first five verses, Picks on the same thing, the egyptian alliance, but it's in isaiah 30, especially

But it's an isaiah 30, especially where he points out. The not didn't take council of me. Didn't consult my spirit. Didn't ask. Uh, didn't ask my advice. And so now in second kings, 20. It's not egypt, it's Babylon. But we have a repetition at the same mistake, don't we?

Ballot babalon, sins. Hezekiah Uh, letters and a present. The present, authenticates, the letters. The present is part of the treasury. From the king of Babylon, because the envoys have to Uh, provide evidence. That they actually are authorized to offer Hezekiah a deal to offer Hezekiah and alliance. Some guy shows up with letters that say the king of Babylon, says, you could be his ally and he doesn't bring the present.

Doesn't bring the bribe, doesn't bring the evidence from the royal treasury. You better be very careful. Uh, because if that guy's not telling the truth, You could make an enemy of Assyria and Babylon at the same time. So when it describes the letters in the present coming at the same time, the point isn't the present, the present is authenticating the letters.

Kind of like in in Uh when the lord jesus comes and he does the miracles. The point doesn't the miracles. The point is, who jesus is, and what he's saying and the miracles are authenticating his word and as identity, So, This is a message from the king of Babylon.

That is Um, That is authenticated by a bribe from the treasury of Babylon. And Hezekiah responds to the letters. By showing all of the wealth and all of the power of judah. And the implication is pretty obvious. This is an audition for an alliance. The letters contain something to the effect of I've sent my representatives.

And if judah has the stuff, if Judah has what it takes. To be a, an ally of rising power babylon, against current power Assyria They are authorized to formalize an alliance. With Hezekiah and with Judah. Now. Based on what the lord has said, previously that Hezekiah, would live these 15 more years and that a cereal would not destroy Judah.

You know, he could make a nathan type mistake. Which is he could think this is exactly what the Lord promised me. Assyria would not be able to take us and here is the way by which we will be protected from Assyria is an alliance with rising power Babylon. Who has come to estema so much that.

They just sent an official envoy with presents from the royal treasury of Babylon. We easily talk ourselves. Into good sounding interpretations of our circumstances. That are not necessarily true. And so Hezekiah. Doesn't just show them everything. But you notice, even when isaiah asks him about the people and what they saw, he's not ashamed of it.

He doesn't ham and haul and try to make excuses. He doesn't realize yet that he's done anything wrong. It says they come from a far-off place for our country from Babylon. Yeah look what the lord has done for us. In other words that we are esteemed by Babylon again it's almost like back to the days of solomon when judo was a great power in the world.

And what have they seen? They have seen all that is in my house, there is nothing among my treasures that i have not shown them. I've done my part. I fulfilled the request and the letters as authenticated by the present. Yeah, don't you want to pat me on the back?

Isaiah We're doing just like god has planned to spare us from Assyria. But how dreadful then? Having in our memory. What the lord had said in isaiah 30. About making alliances without asking his council. Then isaiah said, Hezekiah The word. Of your way. Hear the word that you. Did not.

Think to consult. Before you did such a thing as enter into an alliance with Babylon. Don't you remember that? This is the mistake. For which the sin for which, you know, isaiah doesn't call it just a mistake, he says, adding sin to sin. Don't you remember that? This is the sin for which A cereal was about to be used to destroy Judah.

And now you've repeated it. Not this time with egypt to the west but With Babylon to the east. And then he says, behold the days are coming. And he describes the exile and the devastation. And yet, we know that this comes In part by something even more dreadful. His son, Manassa.

Being given over. To his own sin in a way, that is absolutely horrific and lord sparing us. We will Hear about that next week. But it's a very costly mistake. In the way that the text is written. The. Cause the demerit that provokes, the lord as much more, what manasa does than what Hezekiah did.

But even Hezekiah's mistake ends up being The instrumental means by which Babylon got its intel. They didn't need. To. Send spies to identify all of the judean positions and assets. Because the king, Had showed the Babylonian king's, advisors, All of the judean positions. And assets. And so, even godly men like Hezekiah Making well.

Intentioned errors. Their errors can be profoundly costly. This is caused for us. For humility and for repentance. Humility before god, realizing How prone we are to error. And how great the penalty. Not the penalty. Yes, the penalty. But Especially the consequence, the effect of our error can be Because in our pride we think that we're doing pretty good.

And in our pride, we think our mistakes aren't so big. Yeah, at least they're not huge like that those other people's mistakes. We're really, if they came to full fruition. Any one of our mistakes could really End up being a means by which great harm comes to ourself. To those who are dear to us near to us.

To those who are entrusted. To our oversight. To god's people with whom we are connected. And so there's humility and then there's repentance. The desire, not only that we would Not dishonor. God at all by any sin. But also the second great commandment part of that desire that we would not bring harm.

To our neighbor or the third great commandment. That we would not bring harm to the church. Or to our brother miss mistakes and sins can be very costly. And so, Mistakes and sins can be very costly. And so one of the One of the things that we are often doing in our prayers, Ought to be.

Asking god not to allow. All the, all the foolishness, all of the sinfulness, That we have done and committed and backslidden into That, it wouldn't have. Uh, it's a fact that he would cause the result of it to blow away like chaff. And and not come home to roost.

For us, or for those. Whom he loves and those whom we love, And then in the last place, we see the mercy of god. Or at least, i hope we see the mercy of god. Hezekiah saw the mercy of god. A student as verse 16, isaiah said to Hezekiah, hear the word of yahweh You know, imagine you've walked with the lord as long

as Hezekiah has imagined.

You've been warned and rebuked the way he was in Isaiah 30. And experienced the fruit of his sin. By a lion would an Egypt. And not consulting the lord and then the penalty for that sin when Assyria is on the doorstep and you're And you're tearing your clothes and humiliated before god and crying out to him.

And knowing that it was your foolish king that has brought this on your people and the Lord delivers you. And then you think you're doing well, and you're walking with the lord. And in one tiny little verse. You realize you've done it again? Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Yahweh.

That you didn't wait to hear that. You didn't consult. That you have again, neglected. When the last time this happened a Syria came right to your doorstep. So, when in verse 19, Hezekiah says to Isaiah. The word of Yahweh which you have spoken is good. For he said, well, there not be Peace and truth at least in my days.

He's not saying, What we are tempted to think you say what I have many times thought he was saying, You know, I really don't care what happens to the nation once I'm gone and I really don't care what happens to my sons. No, he's saying what the first half of the verse says, The word of Yahweh which you have spoken is good.

Behold how merciful Yahweh is being to us. That Babylon is not immediately destroying us. That the lord is not immediately destroyed us. Here we are. Having been forgiven of this very sin and now provoking god again to anger. And he's still sparing us for the whole rest of my life.

Behold how merciful the lord is? In his sparing, and in his patience, in the restraint of his response. In other words,

It's in part because we don't see how merciful god is being here. That we are unable to see how thankful Hezekiah is being for that emergency. Behold the word of Yahweh, which I'm sorry. So as a guy said, Isaiah the word of Yahweh, which you have spoken is good.

For he said, Well they're not be peace and truth at least in my days he's amazed at the mercy of god. That's what's happening in verse 19. And god's word is good and as mercy is good. And we should be amazed at the end of every day that he's been, as merciful as he has been.

And all that he has spared us from. And all the good that he has done us. But when we fail to see how merciful god is being. We're like those people. That even a very partially sanctified RC was so frustrated with When they said, why was god's response to Adam so severe?

When he ate the fruit. He said so severe. So this creature from the dirt defies, the living god who said in the day that you eat, it shall surely die. Here's the gospel, instead. I do you think he was being severe? And that's where the famous quote comes from is a, what's wrong with you people?

And that's probably something we need to hear. If we can't see that. The lord's patience and sparing of Hezekiah and Judah for 15 years. Was a great mercy. And if we don't come to the end of every day, However badly we've done. Usually, I think for us in our family that's That's usually the most disturbing thing.

At the end of the day. How badly we have done. And yet isn't how patient and merciful god has been to us a greater truth about the day. The more significant reality from that day. Even then how badly we have done. So that we may come to the end of every day and of course the beginning as well.

But the end of every day with a day's worth of evidence behind it. Saying the word of Yahweh is good. The mercy of Yahweh is good. He spared me today? Of much. However, whatever else happened in the day. He will still have spared us at much. Even at the end of the hardest day, So our god is full of mercy.

And that's the Ultimate lesson of this passage. Not just that. Despite their errors and sins. God views. The godly whom he is working in by his grace, according to that, grace And he commends, he praises his handy work, even in very imperfect saints. Not just, That we ought to be very humble and repentant.

Of committing sin making error because of how significant the costs may end up being. But especially the lesson of this passage is Behold how merciful and patient our goddess. Because this passage isn't just about 15 years. Of mercy. It's about how god was maintaining the line of the tricking.

And bringing Christ into the world. So that we might know that each day's mercy. Is the smallest little portion of that, which comes in everlasting. And infinite mercy. And that it's the merciful one with him, we deal. At the end of every day, and in every circumstance, Preschool, let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this portion of your word. We thank you for Helping us from, Back in chapter 18, and Isaiah, 30 and 31. To understand it better. Forgive us for how coldhearted we are towards you. And How many of our misunderstandings of your word come? From the stallness.

Thank you. Lord. That In the way that you describe. A saint's life, you speak of us like you speak of Job. Like, you speak of Hezekiah. Not. On the hole with reference. To the weakness and the sin that is still there. But with reference to the fruit of your grace and so we pray.

Oh lord that you would motivate us. To grow in grace and Walk in godliness. That you that Christ, the spirit might receive much glory by what you produce and our life. In terms of love to you and obedience to you. We thank you, lord, for reminding us. That just as prayer made a difference in the previous passage.

So also our sins and our mistakes. Can be very costly and time they have real consequences. So that we might be warned off and prevent it. And we pray that that would be the case that your spirit would Give us righteousness and wisdom. To live in a way that understands that.

Actions, have consequences. But we pray most of all O lord that you would give us eyes to see. And ears to hear from your word.

That your word does tell us of your good mercy. And make us able to see it. So, that even the smallest mercies, We will know comes. Come from. The greatness of your mercy to us in Christ. Help us oh, lord's to see everything through the lens. Of your redemption in him.

Of the fellowship that you have brought us into with yourself and And here our prayers, we ask for his sake, Amen.