

**Two Steps Forward, Three Steps Back
Do We Really Trust the Lord All of the Time?
Isaiah 39, 2 Chronicles 32:25 – 33, 2 Kings 20:12 – 20**

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1 Corinthians 10:11–13

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (ESV)

There is a theme that shows up in the Bible continually. Paul referred to this theme in 1 Corinthians 10. It is the theme of failure following a great victory.

This is not the same as recognizing our weaknesses and praying for victory over them. We know where we are weak. Again, from Paul.

2 Corinthians 12:9 “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (ESV)

The problem though is in what it is we think are our strengths. We tend to not talk to the Lord about those, it is a strong point for us, there is no way I can fail in that strong point. Really?

1 Chronicles 11:26a & 41a

“The mighty warriors were: ...,” “Uriah the Hittite ...” (NET)

In 1 Chronicles 11 we obtain a listing of all those men who were fiercely loyal to David and had been with him while he was in hiding from Saul.

Not only were these men fiercely loyal to David, but he was fiercely loyal to them. This loyalty is a strength of David's. He was also fiercely loyal to King Saul and refused to harm him. He was fiercely loyal to YAHWEH and refused to abandon Him.

David was a great general, it was a strength as well.

After securing the Kingdom, Jerusalem and obtaining rest from many of the enemies of Israel, David decided he needed some me time. So he sent Joab off to fight while he remained at home ostensibly to write a few more songs of his love for the Lord. He was about to fail in his areas of strength.

2 Samuel 11:1–4

“In the spring of the year, at the time when kings normally conduct wars, David sent out Joab with his officers and the entire Israelite army. They defeated the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of his palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. Now this woman was very attractive. So David sent someone to inquire about the woman. The messenger said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” David sent some messengers to get her. She came to him and he had sexual relations with her. (Now at that time she was in the process of purifying herself from her menstrual uncleanness.) Then she returned to her home.” (NET)

David failed, he piled onto the failure too.

- Bathsheba got pregnant
- David called for Uriah to come home
- He intended for Uriah to be with his wife and make him think the baby is his
- Uriah is fiercely loyal to David and to his comrades and he refuses to go home
- David arranges for his murder at the hands of the enemy
- David makes others complicit in the murder
- Uriah is killed
- David mourns Uriah and marries Uriah’s widow to cover up the pregnancy
- She has his baby
- Everything has been covered up and hushed up
- Nathan the prophet nails him
- David repents but nothing is ever the same after that.

David failed but did so not in a moment of weakness, but when he was his strongest politically and militarily. But not spiritually.

When things get good, he did like we all tend to do, forget God and cruise on the blessings.

Paul’s warning from 1 Corinthians 10 is haunting. He is telling us that when we think we are at our strongest, we aren’t and are at our most vulnerable to the enemy. Right after a super spiritual victory, we need to be seeking Him rather than cruising.

For King Hezekiah, the Lord has just killed off the Assyrian army and chased the King of Assyria back to Nineveh with his tail between his legs. He also has miraculously healed the King and promised him 15 more years. What a high. Now what are you going to do?

He probably should have opted for going to Disneyworld.

In Isaiah 39 we get the gritty details of an event that takes place after everything has calmed down. Assyria has been taken care of by the Lord and everybody in the surrounding nations know this. It was the lead story on every kingdom’s news feed for some time. The story of how YAHWEH humbled the Assyrian army was being passed around everywhere via the news service of the day, sneaker net. Eventually the news made it to Babylon over 1,000 miles away along the Euphrates River in what is today southern Iraq.

Babylon had been a continual thorn in the side of Assyria, and this was excellent news to hear. But first, some background in Judah.

2 Chronicles 32:25–26

“But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So the LORD’s anger came against him and against Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself and repented of his pride, as did the people of Jerusalem. So the LORD’s anger did not fall on them during Hezekiah’s lifetime.” (NLT)

God had performed miracles as He had promised through Isaiah. But these were miracles for a people who had not taken the invasion in the spirit they should have (Isaiah 22:13).

And then there is the King, he had been truly humbled by YAHWEH.

He now recognized that God is the God of all his life, not just the portions that the culture had told him He was. He was blessed because of the Lord. He had been faithful and the promises of blessings for those who are faithful had started to take place in the King’s life and in his kingdom. Life was good. Like all of us, he began to take things for granted.

The situation for Hezekiah was now much more dire than when Assyria was marching about outside the walls. The true enemy and now been given a small crack of opportunity. Pride began to grow in the King’s heart.

His pride was bound to lead to disaster, as the prophet Isaiah declared. Though only the royal house stood under judgment, the Chronicler brings Judah and Jerusalem into the picture because he was aware of the wider consequences of such action—the deeds of leaders always involve those they lead. (Meyers 1965, 192)

A term is used here in the Hebrew that is like a term used about King Uzziah, the great Grandfather of Hezekiah. “But when he had become powerful, he also became proud, which led to his downfall. He sinned against the LORD his God by entering the sanctuary of the LORD’s Temple and personally burning incense on the incense altar.” (2 Chronicles 26:16, NLT)

King Hezekiah will not react the same way his great grandfather did, but judgement is coming and now will simply be delayed to another day because Hezekiah will respond differently.

Why the pride though?

2 Chronicles 32:27–30

“Hezekiah was very wealthy and highly honored. He built special treasury buildings for his silver, gold, precious stones, and spices, and for his shields and other valuable items. He also constructed many storehouses for his grain, new wine, and olive oil; and he made many stalls for his cattle and pens for his flocks of sheep and goats. He built many towns and acquired vast flocks and herds, for God had given him great wealth. He blocked up the upper spring of Gihon and brought the water down through a tunnel to the west side of the City of David. And so he succeeded in everything he did.” (NLT)

We pray for the Lord to work in our life. We ask Him for healing, or a financial miracle and He shows up in a way that makes it abundantly clear that only God could have bailed us out of the predicament we were in. How do we respond to that? Do we live a life of thanksgiving for what He has done, or do we reflect an entirely different spirit? Do we show ingratitude?

An event that took place during the ministry of Jesus reveals this danger to us more graphically.

Luke 17:12–19

“As he was going into a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance and shouted, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” When Jesus saw them, he told them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” While they were going, they were made clean. But one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, came back and praised God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him.

Now that man was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Ten men were made clean, weren’t they? Where are the other nine? Except for this foreigner, were any of them found to return and give praise to God?” Then he told the man, “Get up, and go home! Your faith has made you well.” (ISV)

They asked to be healed and Jesus said basically, ok, but to show that you have the faith that this is going to be done, start taking steps to prove it to those who need to know. They leave and are not healed yet as they are following his instructions and acting out their faith, they are healed as they do so. There is a problem though, only one came back and said thank you, just one. “Unlike the other lepers, this one perceives that he has been the recipient of divine benefaction—and that at the hand of Jesus.” (Green 1997, 624)

The nine refused to respond in faith to the God who had healed them and so missed out on the far more important healing. The praise and thanksgiving of the Samaritan were actually far more than gratitude. They constituted his faith decision; he was now a member of God’s family and Christ’s messianic community. (Osborne 2018, 413)

Do we trust Him even when things are good? Do we return to Him and just rest in Him in praise and worship? Or do we just go out and do life?

We know that King Hezekiah started off in worship and praise, we looked at the song he wrote last week, and it was obvious he had been truly changed. His reaction to round two with Assyria clearly reflected his faith in what it is the Lord had told him through Isaiah.

He was blessed and this blessing has continued now for some time. But Satan began to lie to him about the source of the blessing. He began to believe the press clippings that were saying how he was the source of the blessing because he was such a wise leader.

As management, he listened to the voices of those praising his management processes, but it was all the Lord.

God makes it very clear in scripture that He hates pride, yet it is one of the things we fall into way more than we should. “The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.” (Proverbs 8:13, ESV)

This takes us back to Paul’s warning. We do not seek the Lord as much as we should after a great victory because yes, we know the Lord did it, but somewhere along the line, we begin to think we may have had something to do with it as well. God blesses, and we become proud about what He has blessed us with. We are truly twisted, but so was King Hezekiah.

Isaiah 39:1

“At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.” (NASB95)

At some point after being healed and the Assyrian army being sent packing by the Lord, some ambassadors arrive from Babylon. There was more to this than just inquiring minds from Babylon. Hezekiah had learned the lesson that YAHWEH wanted to be involved in the running of Judah. Foreign affairs conducted without His counsel had resulted in a mess and the King had learned a rather hard lesson.

2 Chronicles 32:31

“So when the envoys arrived from the Babylonian officials to visit him and inquire about the sign that occurred in the land, God left him alone to test him, in order to know his true motives.” (NET)

The reference to God’s testing (v. 31) also implies a degree of openness about this judgment. When God wants to know everything that was in his heart, this does not mean that God is ignorant, for he knows

every heart (1 Chr. 29:17; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 94:11). Rather, he wishes to ‘make [something] known’ (cf. Gen. 18:21; Deut. 8:2), that is, to provide an opportunity for people to show heartfelt repentance.

God tests in order to refine, to stimulate repentance and to deepen faith (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 20:20; Deut. 8:16). This positive aim separates God’s testing from Satan’s temptations, for the devil merely incites (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 2:3) in order to devour and destroy (Matt. 4:1–10; 1 Pet. 5:8). God’s purpose is also to be distinguished from the curiosity of the Babylonians, who were only attracted by what seemed to them to be the latest astrological novelty. (Selman 1994, 537)

We learn from aggregating the various versions that the Babylonians came for a couple of stated reasons:

- The long day (2 Chronicles 32:31)
- The King’s recovery from his illness (Isaiah 39:1, 2 Kings 20:12)

But what are “the real” reasons for coming?

- They had heard the stories about the defeat of the Assyrian army
- Judah had done something they had never been able to achieve, the defeat and rout of Assyria
- How strong is Judah militarily? How rich, strong and powerful are they?
- Are they a threat to our desire for hegemony?

Hezekiah should have realized that Merodach-Beladan had no personal interest in the health of the king of Judah but only wanted to obligate Hezekiah to become an ally of Babylon. It’s likely that the envoys helped to inflate Hezekiah’s ego by complimenting him on his military resources and personal wealth. (Wiersbe 2002, 134)

(30) At this time it was that the dominion of the Assyrians was overthrown by the Medes; but of these things I shall treat elsewhere. But the king of Babylon, whose name was Baladan, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah with presents, and desired he would be his ally and his friend. (31) So he received the ambassadors gladly, and made them a feast, and showed them his treasures, and his armory, and the other wealth he was possessed of, in precious stones, and in gold, and gave them presents to be carried to Baladan, and sent them back to him. (Josephus 1987, 268)

Twice he had tried to break away from the Assyrian Empire, and once had succeeded in taking the city of Babylon. After his second reign (of nine months in 703-702 B.C.) he was deposed by Sennacherib and went to Elam. While there (and while still known as the king of Babylon) he actively tried to form an alliance with other nations to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Undoubtedly his friendly visit after Hezekiah’s illness was intended to persuade the king of Judah to join the rebel alliance in the fight against Assyria. (Martin 1985, 1090)

In comes this pagan delegation from a city state which had fought twice against Assyria trying to free themselves from being a vassal and both times unsuccessfully. We see that there are two things specifically pointed out by scripture as the reason for the visit, the miracle of the long day coupled with the healing of the King from a fatal disease. But the hidden agenda, about those pesky Assyrians that were killed off.

The purpose of God blessing Judah was to pique the interest of the nations. Who is this God who defends His people as vigorously as YAHWEH did? What we have here is a ready-made opportunity for King Hezekiah to give all the glory to YAHWEH and point to Him.

All the King needed to do was to seek the Lord, just like he did when he was in trouble. Now he isn’t in trouble, that he can see. The reality though is the bait has been offered, and he is now hooked. Time to reel him in.

Isaiah 39:2 “Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.” (NASB95)

4 Kingdoms 20:13 (2 Kings 20:13)

“Hezekiah rejoiced at them and showed to them all the house of the treasury—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the good olive oil—as well as the house of the liturgical vessels and as much as was found in its treasuries. There was no thing that Hezekiah did not show to them in his house and in all of his authority.” (Lexham Press 2020, 4 King 20:13)

And he gave all honor and praise to YAHWEH who did all of this for him, right? That is no where in the text. “Here was a ready-made opportunity for Hezekiah to glorify God before the pagan Babylonians, to tell of his greatness and of his grace.” (Constable 2003, Is 39:2)

This is a test. As we saw in 2 Chronicles 32:31, this is a test from YAHWEH, it is all in the hands of Hezekiah. The key phrase, “Hezekiah was pleased...”. Flattery was being used, this little kingdom of Judah had attracted the great power of Babylon. The King is flattered by it and flattered by them.

Warning bells should be going off in his head.

In business, I used to get this all of the time. I would receive a phone call that would start off with lavish praise for what we had written and then comes the zinger, I need this or that.

Proverbs 29:5 “A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.” (ESV)

Using the imagery of a hunter trapping a wild animal, the proverb represents the flatterer as seducing his victim into a sense of false security to plunder his wealth. (Waltke 2005, 433)

Flattery is a tool commonly used by the enemy to make the discernment antennas go down. How could someone who is saying such nice things about me possibly have evil intent or ulterior motives? Hooked.

1 Thessalonians 2:5–6

“For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.” (ESV)

The Greek word translated as flattery is *κολακείας* (*kolakeias*) - praise as a means of gratifying someone's vanity—‘flattering talk, flattery.’ (Louw and Nida 1996, 430)

“Flattery” has to do with the speaker's fawning on his hearers, “buttering them up” as it were, in order to gain a hearing. This is the only New Testament occurrence of the Greek word used here, but it was well known in Greek antiquity. Indeed, according to Dio Chrysostom, it was one of the primary means of an itinerant's personal gain. But all the time such flattery was simply “a mask to cover up greed.” (Fee 2009, 63)

The word carries with it the idea of the tortuous methods by which one man seeks to gain influence over another, generally for his own ends... (Moulton and Milligan 1930, 352)

If Hezekiah had sought YAHWEH regarding this visit, then it might have gone down differently. Jesus gave us a couple of great examples of how to deal with flattery, drill down to the real purpose for the interaction and ignore the flattery.

John 3:1–3

“Now a certain man, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.

For no one could perform the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus replied, “I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”” (NET)

Mark 10:17–18

“Now as Jesus was starting out on his way, someone ran up to him, fell on his knees, and said, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” (NET)

The King was seduced by the kind words and after all, Babylon might be a good friend to have in the future; “this kind of reliance upon, and delight in, human power and glory is exactly what the first half of the book is warning against. We dare not be seduced by these, for they lead only to a desert (ch. 34). Only in trust in God is there abundance (ch. 35).” (Oswalt 1986, 694-695)

What has Hezekiah really learned from the recent past?

In the middle east of Isaiah, when you show a visiting power everything you have, you are courting them as a potential ally. He was basically telling the Babylonians that he would be a powerful ally for them. Look at everything I have. “Instead of taking the letter and opening it before the Lord like he did the letter from the Assyrians, he just put it aside. They had flattered him, and so he gave the visitors the VIP treatment. He took them on a tour of the grounds of Jerusalem.” (McGee 1997, 283)

Isaiah 39:3–4

“Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?” And Hezekiah said, “They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon.” He said, “What have they seen in your house?” So Hezekiah answered, “They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.”” (NASB95)

Even under questioning from Isaiah, the King was still pleased with himself over being sought out by Babylon. He thought it was all appropriate and he might have another ally in the future. He never sought the Lord on any of this.

Hezekiah had failed the test. After a time of spiritual triumph, a time of experiencing God’s blessing for the nation and for himself personally, he once again fell into the trap of segmenting out his relationship with YAHWEH. This time it was not a bad thing, but a good thing. Do we seek the Lord when it is a good thing that happens?

Isaiah’s opening phrase to the King tells us the possibility of a hidden agenda. “What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?” The King never answers the first question. Once again, foreign affairs are not an issue for the prophet or YAHWEH.

The King does say they came from a distant land. Implying that he was ok per the Torah. Shades of Joshua 9:6. After all, they did not come from the land, the restriction on covenants was with those in the land. But Isaiah had said to have nothing to do with the nations.

Exodus 23:31–33 “And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”” (ESV)

Babylon is on the border of the land per Moses and Hezekiah knows that. He emphasizes they came from a far country, but then adds, from Babylon. But Isaiah has said to have nothing to do with the nations.

What Hezekiah is really saying is that “I am important. I am so important that even the King of Babylon has shown up looking for me to be an ally with them. I am important.” This is all about pride. Hezekiah has no idea why Isaiah is there, so he continues to talk and tells him he showed them everything. 2 Kings gives the same story.

2 Kings 20:13–15

“Hezekiah welcomed them and showed them his whole storehouse, with its silver, gold, spices, and high quality olive oil, as well as his armory and everything in his treasuries. Hezekiah showed them everything in his palace and in his whole kingdom. Isaiah the prophet visited King Hezekiah and asked him, “What did these men say? Where do they come from?” Hezekiah replied, “They come from the distant land of Babylon.” Isaiah asked, “What have they seen in your palace?” Hezekiah replied, “They have seen everything in my palace. I showed them everything in my treasuries.” (NET)

He had no idea of the serious import of this, for he had not realized that the princes were actually spies, who had come to search out the land, and to report to the King of Babylon all that which they found. (Ironsides 1952, 233)

For someone who thought he was so wise by cutting a deal with Egypt, a deal which utterly failed, you would think he would have better sense than to believe anyone, but they did speak well of him and flattered him. It worked.

So now Isaiah has had confirmed to him what the Lord has already told him.

Isaiah 39:5–6

“Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the LORD.” (NASB95)

Isaiah has been down this road before. Last time was with King Ahaz, who wanted to cut a deal with Assyria resulting in the prophecy seen in Isaiah 8:5–8. Now it is his son, who should know better, who has moved towards cutting a deal with Babylon. Well not really cutting a deal but treating them like they were looking to do so. The King had no idea he had just invited thieves to check out his strong box.

The first words from Isaiah changes the whole tone of the conversation. The word from Isaiah is one of prophecy and of impending doom. The pride of Hezekiah in his wealth was sin.

Remember, Hezekiah was a Godly King. God had healed him. He had experienced a great miracle and witnessed another in the death of the Assyrian army. He had received a personal promise from God. He was famous. He was wealthy. He was instrumental in bringing revival to the land. He was honored by God. All is right with his world right now. All of that said, he failed and sinned.

We might say that Hezekiah sinned in at least five ways:

- Pride, in that he was proud of the honors the Babylonians brought.
- Ingratitude, in that he took honor to himself that really belonged to God.
- Abusing the gifts given to him, where he took the gifts and favors to his own honor and gratification of his lusts (2 Chronicles 32:25–26).
- Carnal confidence, in that he trusted in the league he had made with the King of Babylon.
- Missing opportunity, in that he had a great opportunity to testify to the Babylonian envoys about the greatness of God and the LORD’S blessing on Judah. Instead, he glorified himself. (Guzik 2005, 2 Ki 20:12-13)

When Isaiah starts by referring to YAHWEH, suddenly, Hezekiah begins to realize what he has done. The light begins to go on that he might have just done something that has attracted YAHWEH’S attention. It could be his pride still had him thinking this was going to be more blessing, but the way Isaiah introduced the topic in verse 5 is by a formula of judgement, not blessing.

Hezekiah's pride over all his treasures was sin; God's judgment would fall. The Babylonians would remember the wealth in Jerusalem. The time would surely come when everything in Jerusalem's royal palace and treasuries would be "carried off to Babylon." (Horton 2000, 297)

The prophet Micah was also ministering during the reign of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah should already be aware of the threat from Babylon because of what Micah had said prior to Assyria showing up.

Micah 4:9–10

"But why are you now screaming in terror? Have you no king to lead you? Have your wise people all died? Pain has gripped you like a woman in childbirth. Writhe and groan like a woman in labor, you people of Jerusalem, for now you must leave this city to live in the open country. You will soon be sent in exile to distant Babylon. But the LORD will rescue you there; he will redeem you from the grip of your enemies." (NLT)

After all, they had their king to direct operations and counsel them with his royal wisdom. What better guide could they have? They had trusted him and applauded his policies so long that it was inconsistent now to refuse to back him to the bitter end. So Micah satirizes the failure of human leadership and implicitly accuses his hearers of lack of faith in God. Both the situation and the sentiment are akin to those of Isaiah, who accused Judah's leaders of carrying out plans that had not come from Yahweh, and of not consulting him but instead looking to Egyptian armaments as the way out of their difficulties (Isa. 30:1; 31:1). Micah is speaking at a time when the futility of such counsels has become clear to all. (Allen 1976, 332-333)

Hezekiah, since you love Babylon so much, and you have shown them everything, then they will take everything at a point in the future. And it gets worse.

Isaiah 39:7

"And some of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "" (NASB95)

There is more to the royal line becoming servants of a foreign king, it is around the word translated as "officials." That is the Hebrew word סַרְסִימִים (sarisim) - eunuch (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 710)

The castrated slave, who could establish no family of his own and had to accommodate himself to living as an alien, was utterly dependent on his master as well as devoted and dependable. Eunuchs were suitable as overseers in harems and often became confidants of the ruler. As such, at different times and in different countries they did indeed acquire political influence, as they did among the Persian Achaemenids, at the Chinese emperor's court, under some Roman emperors, in the Byzantine Empire, and in the Eastern church. Mesopotamian rulers obligated highly placed eunuchs through real estate grants; when the owner died, he had no heirs, and his possessions reverted back to the crown. (Kedar-Kopfstein 1999, 347)

Now Isaiah has the King's attention. Having direct descendants being made eunuchs endangers the Davidic line.

The fulfillment of this is reflected in Daniel 1.

Daniel 1:1–4

"In the third year of King Jehoiakim of Judah, after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had arrived at Jerusalem, he began to besiege it. And the Lord gave it into his hand along with Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and a part of the holy vessels of the Lord. And he took them away to Babylon in the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he stored the vessels in the temple of his god. And the king told Ashpenaz, his own chief eunuch, to bring him some of the sons of the leading men of Israel and some of the royal line and some of the nobles, unblemished young men and handsome in appearance and well versed in all skills and wisdom and sound judgment and skilled in letters and language and prudent and clever and

wise and having great ability and aptitude, so that they could function in the house of the king. And he commanded him to instruct them in the literature and language of the Chaldeans” (Lexham Press 2020, Dan 1:1-4)

YAHWEH protects the Davidic line even though some of its members are indeed made eunuchs, killed and enslaved. “Isaiah spoke to Hezekiah the following prophecy: (1) Hezekiah’s treasures (riches) will be carried away as booty to Babylon; and (2) Hezekiah’s descendants will be carried away as captives to Babylon. These prophecies were fulfilled in the years 605–586 B.C., in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. This prophecy is remarkable in that it predicts that Babylon, then a nation of little power, would someday be dominant in the Middle East, exercising authority over Judah. This prophecy also serves as an introduction to chapters 40–66, which chapters picture Babylon as being the enemy of Judah.” (Gingrich 1993, 44-45)

Isaiah 39:8

“Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “For there will be peace and truth in my days.”” (NASB95)

Really? That’s your answer King Hezekiah? God’s word is good at least it won’t happen to me? That is a bit self-centered. It is reflective of what has happened to him inside. You wonder how such a good king could have someone like Manasseh as a son, this begins to show us how. Self-centeredness.

2 Kings 20:19–21

“Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?” The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son reigned in his place.” (ESV)

2 Kings does not add much for us regarding Hezekiah’s response. The most insight into Hezekiah’s response comes to us from 2 Chronicles.

2 Chronicles 32:25–26

“But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem. But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.” (ESV)

This shows us that the statement of Hezekiah in Isaiah and 2 Kings is one of repentance and recognition that God is sovereign, but it also shows us that King Hezekiah who began well, did not end well. He ended centered on self.

Hezekiah was satisfied to have things go well for the moment: the temporary relief of Jerusalem (chap. 37), fifteen additional years of life (chap. 38), and peaceful security for his moment in time (chap. 39). He lacked the longer view and the patient character to work for it. His piety was the prayer of the moment. (Watts 2005, 601)

There is no doubt that Hezekiah started out as a godly king, and overall his reign was one of outstanding godliness (2 Kings 18:3–7). Yet his beginning was much better than his end; Hezekiah did not finish well. God gave Hezekiah the gift of 15 more years of life, but the added years did not make him a better or more godly man. (Guzik, Isaiah, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible 2000, Is 39:8)

The goal for us as believers is to end well, not like Hezekiah ended. He did a lot of great things for the Lord but stopped and lived on his press clippings.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” (NASB95)

Paul did not start well, he started off as a persecutor of the Church, but he ended well because of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:7–8

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (NASB95)

There is only one way for us to go through the Christian life and end well. That is by relying on the power of Jesus Christ and allowing Him to rule and reign in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Hezekiah opted to make himself the center of his universe rather than to make God the center. Unlike Hezekiah, as NT believers, we have the Holy Spirit to assist.

Philippians 1:6

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” (NLT)

We are secure in Christ and, if we allow Him, He will ensure we remain faithful.

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