

Isaiah 38-39 • Hezekiah's Sickness and Pride

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Isaiah. Last week we covered how God supernaturally moved; very powerfully delivered the southern kingdom of Judah from the attacks and the threats made by the Assyrian army. You'll remember that the angel of the Lord went out and in a single evening slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, and brought about a great powerful work of God to deliver the Jews who are living in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Now as we get into chapter 38, the narrative shifts from the concerns of the nation of Israel, now to the personal concerns of king Hezekiah. And as a side note, there's a very good chance that what we're about to read actually took place before the previous two chapters. And the Bible does that.

And there's also a chance that we could be reading in chronological order. But there's a reference here about God's deliverance from the Assyrian threat which seems to have already happened. Although there's a possibility that Assyria could remount an attack and there could still be a threat. So either way, it's just probably interesting and worth noting.

But again, we're dealing here with the personal concerns now of a man who started off as a very godly king. And it says here in verse one that:

“In those days Hezekiah became sick and (then we're told here that he) was at the point of death. And (to make matters even more dire, we're told here as that verse continues on that) Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, “Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover.” (ESV)

It's a pretty rotten thing to hear. By the way, we know from some of the other references about Hezekiah and the other passages that speak even of his kingship, his reign, and this event, that he was 39 years old at the time. So he's not, he was not old. At least not from my perspective anyway. Still wet behind the ears and yet there's a word of grace here. God is telling him to put his house in order, and in other words, He's giving him time to do that.

But we're told here in verse 2 that Hezekiah's response is immediate and quite profound. It says,

"...Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord,³ and said, "Please, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah (we're told here) wept bitterly."

And there's a whole lot more in these 2 verses than the writer is really giving us. But there's a great deal that is going on here just about Hezekiah's heart, his repentance, his attitude toward the Lord. But I find it very interesting that we're told here in verse 4 that:

"...the word of the Lord then came (a second time) to Isaiah: (and the message here in verse 5 is)⁵ "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David, your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.⁶ I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city."

So the prophet comes to Hezekiah and tells him that God has changed His position. Now this presents for us kind of an interesting sort of a theological dilemma because we're told elsewhere in the Word of God, God in fact says in the first person, I am not a man that I should change My mind. (Numbers 23:19)

We're presented with this situation, this narrative here, where it appears very much like God changed His mind related to Hezekiah and the time of his death. And we have to believe that this was always in God's plan. That He knew how Hezekiah was going to respond. He knew that He was going to graciously give him another 15 years and so forth. Which, by the way, still doesn't seem like a tremendous amount of time. That would mean he would die at the age of 44.

But even so, this is the grace of God, responding to Hezekiah as He does. And not only does He respond by giving him a promise, but it says in verse 7:

"This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing he has promised:⁸ Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps." So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.

So we're going to be told here at the end of the chapter, that Hezekiah actually sought a sign. But anyway, the Lord gave him a pretty powerful sign. The sun doesn't go backward and apparently Ahaz, king Ahaz, had built this elaborate

kind of sundial from which they would tell the time and so forth. And the Lord gave this supernatural sign of actually turning back time, as crazy as that sounds, to give this confirmation to Hezekiah. And then we find out that Hezekiah responded.

Now it begins in verse 9 by saying,

“A writing of Hezekiah...” But I want to tell you before we get into this, that what makes this section of this narrative significant is that, this is the only where, place that this appears. This doesn't appear in the 2 Kings account of this. And we get some really good insights here from Isaiah as it relates to Hezekiah's heart, what he felt, how he cried out to God, and kind of the whole dynamic of his conversation and wrestling with the Lord during this time.

And it says in verse 10, this is Hezekiah's heart, what he wrote. And it's kind of like a Psalm in a sense, but he says,

“I said, In the middle of my days, I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol (and that means the grave) for the rest of my years.”

Now, I want to stop you there just for a moment. Because I need to point out the fact that, what we're going to be seeing in Hezekiah's statement, his writing here about this thing as he's talking about it now in retrospect. We're going to be seeing how the Jews perceive death. How they perceived the grave. How they perceived life after death, if you will.

And it's very different from the way you and I do. And it begins right here, where he says, *“I am consigned to the gates of Sheol.”* And that's really just a fancy way of saying, I'm assigned to the grave. And he says, *“for the rest of my years”* which is a very interesting statement.

You know, somebody could reasonably argue and say, no, your years will be coming to an end. And there are no years from that point on. But it's a way of saying, for the rest of my time.

In fact, he goes on. Look at verse 11. He says,

“I said, I shall not see the Lord, in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.”

Now, isn't that interesting? When you and I are facing death, we say really the exact opposite. We say I'm going to go be with the Lord. In fact, that's what we

say when a believer dies. We say they went to be with the Lord. And in fact, we get to see the Lord at that point. We get to see those who have even gone before us. We get to be reunited with them. So it's interesting how he is speaking here of the, of death.

Verse 12, it goes on:

“My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; (Interesting sort of figurative statements to speak of death.) And "from day to night you bring me to an end;”

Wow! And then he says in verse 13:

“I calmed myself until morning; (which is to say, I waited patiently until morning, but he says,) like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end.”

And this is basically how Hezekiah felt about what the Lord was doing in his life. He felt like God was making an end of him. Isn't that interesting.

When you and I face death we recognize, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and all that it has meant to us, all that it speaks to us about life after this world, we know that death is essentially a defeated foe. It remains a foe. It's an enemy. In fact, the Bible says the last enemy to be destroyed will be death. (1 Corinthians 15:26)

So we still don't look at death as our friend, right? Sometimes the world wants to try to... Isn't that funny? The world has a very interesting perspective on death. They will do everything in their power to keep it from happening. But then when it seems inevitable, they try to embrace it as a friend.

Well, the Bible kind of puts us in a completely different perspective related to death. We recognize that it's an enemy. But we recognize it's a defeated enemy that has not yet been vanquished. You know what I mean by that? It means it has not yet been eliminated. But it is still defeated in the sense that we can now say about death, where is your victory, right? Where's your sting? It's been taken away, right? (1 Corinthians 15:55)

Through the death of Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection, which shows us, because He is the first fruits of all those who will rise from the dead, that, that death can't hold us any longer. And for you and I, when these bodies

come to an end and they expire, it's like you and I are walking through a doorway. And we enter into the presence of the Lord. And that's it.

There is no grave from the standpoint of you and I, I mean, the body still exists and that may be in a grave if that's the way you choose to deal with your remains or whatever, however you choose to do that. The point is, who you are goes into the presence of the Lord immediately into the presence of God. And that's such a wonderful and comforting idea, particularly when that happens to believers.

I've done two memorial services in the last month. But both of them were for believers, and it is so delightful. I mean, death is never delightful. But it is so delightful to look at the family members of a believer who has gone on. And to be able to say your loved one, the body gave up, but that's it. Your loved one is alive and now more alive than ever.

Paul referred to it, the apostle Paul, refers to it as the life that is truly life. We think of this life as all there is in the world. That's, of course that's all they have to go on. For us... remember what Paul said when he wrote about the possibility of him either staying or dying?

He said, "I'm kind of torn. I know that if I stay here with you, it's going to mean fruitful service. And I want that, I want that kind of... I want to be able to bless you and serve you that way by having my life continue on this earth." But he says, frankly I would rather depart and be with Christ. And he called it better by far. Better by far. (Philippians 1:21-24)

Now, that's not the attitude you're getting from Hezekiah here, is it? It's completely the opposite. Hezekiah is not saying, oh, yippee! This is better by far. No he's saying, life is going to basically be over for me. Because he doesn't have a concept yet like you and I do, of what awaits us after death.

And the revelations to the people of Israel were not that many related to this. God dealt with Israel largely on a physical plane. And there wasn't a great deal of spiritual insight related to things like life after death. And there's these references that you see over and over in the Bible when people die. It says, that he was gathered to his fathers. And that basically just means that he was buried where his fathers were buried, or his forefathers. Where he was gathered to that place of burial.

They didn't really speak about what came beyond, and so forth. So it was just the grave. And that's not to say that's as far as their beliefs went, but the

revelation didn't go much further. It was a very difficult sort of a prospect to be brought to an end this way.

Look what he says in verse 14:

“Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove.”

You ever hear the morning doves when they're going off. And they get up on the rooftop in the morning and you hear them just going nuts. It's kind of mournful, isn't it? The way they... I frankly would much rather hear like a, another bird singing rather than the mournful cry of a mourning dove. But that's what we get and so there you go.

But he says,

“My eyes are weary with looking upward. (I'm tired of crying out to God and so forth. He says,) O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety!

¹⁵ *What shall I say? (He's telling us here how his prayer time went with the Lord here as he cried out. He says,) For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. (In other words, this didn't come from a doctor telling me, "you've got a month to live," this came from God. Who's going to go against God, who's going to refute Him? He says,) I walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.*

¹⁶ *O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh restore me to health and make me live!”*

So Hezekiah prayed. He prayed for healing. He asked God to heal him from the physical issue that he was dealing with.

And then Hezekiah begins to speak in the following area of how God responded to him through the prophet Isaiah. And it says in verse 17:

“Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness;”

In other words, looking at this thing from the back end, right, from the other side of it. Now, Hezekiah is able to have a different vantage point, a different view. And he realized that his suffering had a purpose. That God had a purpose in his suffering. And he realizes that God's plan had been laid out for him. And he has since kind of learned from it. He's gained good things from it. Can you guys relate?

Have you ever gone through a really rough time, and you were like, really, almost embittered by it during the time that it was going on. But then later on, you got to the other side of it, and you realized how many things God taught you through the midst of that difficult season. And you're like, wow!

I mean, the lessons that I learned are precious to me now and incredibly valuable. I wish I wouldn't have had to go through what I did in order to learn them. I wish I could have bypassed all of that and just kind of sat down in my desk and said, Lord, just teach me and I'll learn. Right.

Isn't it funny we don't though. We don't. Because we just kind of carrying on with life and we're not focusing like we do... boy, can God get our attention though? Can God get our attention? Does He know how to get your attention?

He's gotten a lot of people's attention, through this worldwide pandemic. If I had a dollar for everybody who has emailed me from wherever they live and just said, this thing has really been a wakeup call to me personally and I've gotten back together in my relationship with the Lord. I've gotten back into the Word. I've gotten back into prayer. I was, I had just, I had strayed from God and this whole thing just really shook me to the core and brought me back to a place of taking serious the things of God.

If I..., oh let me tell you, I'd be a rich man. Because a lot of people have said that. And my online studies through Revelation and Daniel (books in the Bible) have just blown up from people wanting to know what this means, what it's all about, how does this apply to the end times and it has just really gotten people's attention.

But think about it - had we not gone through this, how many of those people might have just wandered away for good. You have to kind of wonder, don't you? So God has used this in a powerful way. He's used it to get people's attention, and He does that.

Notice on the back end of this, Hezekiah says here, I realize, *“behold, it was for my welfare that I went through all this great bitterness.”*

And then notice he says here in the middle of that verse, verse 17:

“but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, (and then this is a very telling statement) for you have cast all my sins behind your back.”

Now this statement here from Hezekiah helps us to see that he came to a place of understanding that his sickness had some correlation or some connection to sin in his life. Because as he's talking about his deliverance, he makes reference to the fact that, God has cast all of his sins behind his back.

By the way, do you know that this reference, this phrase to, God casting sins behind his back, is the only time this appears in the entire Bible right here in Isaiah. Now there's a similar reference in the Bible, but it's the opposite of this. It's when God's people take His Word and cast it behind their back. And you've probably heard references like that. And God will accuse these people and say, you've taken My word and you've cast it, and the idea is, like casting it over your shoulder, like it's an unwanted thing.

And yet, isn't it interesting that now Hezekiah turns that phrase around to speak of how God has dealt with his sin. And I like it. I like it because it is a powerful word picture to you and I of what God promised would be the case under the new covenant.

You know, when God outlined the new covenant in Jeremiah chapter 31, you guys might remember that. We won't take time to look at it, but in Jeremiah 31, God prophesied what the new covenant was going to be like. And one of the last things he says about the new covenant, which is the covenant we're in right now, is he said, *"I will remember their sins no more."* (Jeremiah 31:34) I like that. God says, He will remember your sins no more.

It breaks my heart when I'm talking to Christians who are constantly bringing up their past sins. And what they're doing is they're kind of applying a karma, sort of an attitude. And they'll go through life and then something challenging, difficult will happen in their lives and they'll think back, okay, this has to be God punishing me because of something that I did in the past.

And I've had people write me or talk to me and say, could this be because, 15 years ago I da da da... tell something. Or could this be because of 10 years ago I did this... and stuff like. And I got to remind them about the new covenant that we're under. I got to remind them of the fact that 1 John 1:9 says *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just (and will) to forgive us ... and cleanse us from all unrighteousness..."* And now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

And I have to go through and remind them. And once I do, it's funny how quickly Christians will come to the party on that. They'll go, oh yeah, you're

right, you're right. And they're...I don't usually have to convince them very much. All I'll have to do is just remind them of what they already know.

But do you know what has happened in a case like that? They've gotten their eyes off the promises of God and onto their sin. And again it's..., and the enemy loves to do this. You go through a hard time, you go through a stressful situation, you lose your job, your car breaks down, somebody gets mad at you, a relationship breaks up, you, you lose money or whatever the case might be.

And the enemy loves to come along and whisper in your ear and begin to talk about all the things that you've done that probably are the reason why that happened. Mink, mink, mink, (mimicking the enemy babbling.) And we are just, we're quick to grab onto it and believe it. Oh man, pastor Paul, do you think this is because... I didn't... I knew there was that guy one time about a year ago and I was supposed to witness to him and I didn't. Now look what's happened! I lost my job! I know, I knew I should have witnessed to that guy!

Wow, I'm thinking to myself. If that's the kind of relationship that you have with God, we need to do some adjusting here. Because that's not the way God works. That's not the way God...

Listen people, the Bible tells us in very clear terms that God does not treat us as our sins deserve. Listen, my life has given Him plenty of justification for vaporizing me where I stand right now; right? And I'm willing to bet it's the same with you.

We've done enough things, we got enough bones in our closet, if God wanted to go back, if He wanted to violate His promise and His word saying that I will remember their sins no more, and He wanted to suddenly just recall everything that we've ever done, oh, we'd be toast! Right here, right now, forever!

But that's not the way God treats us. He does not treat us as our sins deserve. He treats us with mercy. He doesn't give us what we deserve to get. And the reason He doesn't do that, the reason He doesn't give us what we deserve, is because Jesus took what you deserve. Do you understand? Jesus bore your penalty. For God to penalize you, would be to go back on why He sent His son to die on the cross. And He's not going to do that.

Now if God does bring some form of correction into your life, it's done for discipline, right? That's why God does that. And the Bible even refers to that actually in terms of judgment. It will use the word judgment. But it is not a judgment unto condemnation.

Keep your finger here. I actually want to show you this, okay? Go over to 1 Corinthians for just a moment if you would. I hadn't planned on taking you here, but I want to do this anyway. This actually came up in my own personal Bible study. And I don't have it underlined in this Bible, so I'm going to have to find it here real quick.

Yeah, 1 Corinthians chapter 11; and then skip down, if you would, to verse 32, 11:32. Here's what it says, he's talking to believers. *“But when we are judged by the Lord, (that's us, that's believers, we are disciplined and there's a reason behind it,) so that we not be condemned along with the world.”* Listen, the sins of the world are going to be judged by God. And you're not going to be part of that, because your ultimate eternal sins have been dealt with at the cross.

So now God is disciplining you and I, from time to time, so that we won't be glomped in with all the other people who are going to be judged with the world. But see, any kind of a thing like that is God's discipline, right? That's the way you and I are to look at the difficulties that come along. It is not karma. It's not God getting you back because you didn't do something right.

Good grief, there's not a day that goes by that you don't do something right. So we need to get over ourselves. And we need to start looking to God's mercy and God's forgiveness which flows from the precious blood of Jesus Christ and keeps on cleansing us from our sin. And it's such a beautiful picture.

And I even kind of like the way Hezekiah says it here in the middle of verse 17, *“in love you have delivered my life.”* That's a great statement, isn't it; *“in love you have delivered my life.”* You've *“cast all my sins behind your back.”* They are forgotten.

Now notice again, the understanding of death that comes in verse 18. It kind of rises to the surface again here. He says,

“For (the grave, again, that's the Hebrew) Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness.

¹⁹ The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness.”

So that's really interesting, isn't it? I mean, what you're kind of hearing Hezekiah say. But again, you're looking at the comments of a man who is making statements related to death without the revelation that you and I have been given throughout the rest of the course of God's Word and particularly into

the New Testament. And we know that those who die, do praise the Lord. We know that they are in the presence of God. We know that they continue to thank and praise God and so forth.

Verse 20:

“The Lord will save me, and we will play my music (In other words we'll praise the Lord with music) on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the Lord.” Hezekiah essentially kind of dedicates the remainder of his life here to praising the Lord and so forth.

Now the last 2 verses of the chapter chronologically don't fit here at the end of the chapter. They really go between verses 6 and 7. If you read these, it says,

“²¹ Now Isaiah had said (past tense) "Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.” And that was the process by which God brought the healing into his life.

And then verse 22 says,

“Hezekiah had (also) said, (again past tense) “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?”” In other words, what is the sign that I will be healed and be able to go up and worship and praise God?

Those verses are given to us at the very end, but they actually go between verses 6 and 7. Because they're just kind of meant to clarify a couple of points that are given to us there in the passage.

All right, chapter 39. And this is a fairly short chapter, but it is very interesting, very insightful chapter. And it says,

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

Now you normally don't hear that a king was sick and recovered, unless it was like a big deal. And this was a big deal because there was a corresponding miracle that went along with it. Time went back. And presumably it did it for other people too, that other people kind of noticed, man, this is a lengthy afternoon or something like that.

The word begins to get around and they begin to, it spreads, I'm sure through the caravans and the merchants and so forth. And they get the word that God made a promise to Hezekiah and confirmed the healing in this incredible and supernatural way.

So we're told here that Hezekiah receives this delegation from Babylon, from the king of Babylon. The king himself doesn't come, but he sends envoys, and he sends some notes.

And we're told here in verse 2 that:

“Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. (And then it goes on right away to tell us,) And he showed them his treasure house, (And) the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, (in fact) his whole armory, (that's everything they have to supply implements to their military forces, right?) all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.”

Now, we need to stop here for just a moment and we need to kind of, kind of look at this situation and kind of just ask ourselves some questions related to dissecting this passage. It's like, what exactly is going on here?

The fact that Hezekiah should welcome these envoys who came to really kind of just wish him well, that's not that hard to understand. I mean, somebody sends some envoys from a foreign land, hey, king heard that you are sick and now you've recovered. We came to just kind of wish you well and so forth. No problem there.

But what's interesting is how Hezekiah responded to these guys. And I think that there might be a key in the very first verse of the chapter that tells us that these envoys came with letters. With letters.

Now this is important. And you and I don't know what was in those letters. But from the way Hezekiah responded to those envoys, we can kind of guess. Because he extensively revealed to them all of his wealth and all of his military prowess to these individuals. He basically showed him everything. And that suggests to us that this envoy, these envoys from Babylon, are paying more than just a courtesy call to king Hezekiah to say, glad you're doing better.

But it appears rather that this is an attempt to solicit the kingdom of Judah to take sides with Babylon against the Assyrian army. Because remember the

Assyrians are the threat. And they're the ones who've been going around and knocking everybody's teeth out, conquering every nation in and around Judah.

Now, not only has God done this incredible miracle to restore Hezekiah to health, but certainly the word has gotten around that 185,000 Assyrian troops died in a single night. And nobody can explain why - outside of God's understanding. They just, they woke up the next morning and they were all dead. Something's going on here with this Hezekiah guy. He's somebody you want to hitch your wagon to.

The king of Babylon sends these envoys and again, these letters, I think, are the important thing. And I believe what's going on here is that essentially the Babylonians are coming to Judah to say, let's throw in our lot together against Assyria.

Now, what Hezekiah doesn't know, and there's really no way he could know, is that many years down the road, Babylon is going to grow in power. And they are going to begin to conquer all of the surrounding lands. And they will ultimately conquer Judah.

And that happens during the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah. You can read about it throughout the prophecies of Jeremiah. And we'll get to it eventually here on our Wednesday night studies, Lord willing.

Hezekiah doesn't know that. But this is, I think, fairly obvious what is going on here. And what is also fairly obvious is that all of what Hezekiah did here as far as showing him, showing them his treasures and so forth, he did without consulting the Lord.

And we begin to assume that there's some level of pride that has entered into the picture as it relates to Hezekiah's heart. And you'll notice that the following conversation is really interesting. Verse 3 says,

“Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, “What did these men say? And from where did they come to you?” Hezekiah said, “They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon.””

Did you notice that? Hezekiah, he specifically mentions that they came from a long distance. That would be, that would be an act of honoring him. For a king to come from a short distance would be no big deal. But to come, to put together an envoy, and to travel a long distance, that means this is very important. This meeting with Hezekiah is extremely important. And Hezekiah

has now had his vanity inflated through this. They came from a long distance to talk to me, right? A lot of trouble.

In verse 4, it says,

“He (and this is Isaiah speaking here) said, “What have they seen in your house?” (And) Hezekiah answered, (Well) “They have seen all that is in my house. There's nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.””

Again we learned that Hezekiah kind of basically threw open the doors and showed them everything. And we're going to see in the coming verses that, that was a very foolish thing for Hezekiah to do.

But it appears that his motives were probably out of a desire to impress and please these people who came along and honored him, by coming from such a long way. Honored him by saying, obviously there's a supernatural thing going on in your life Hez. And we're, we like you. The king sent us this long distance to tell you that he wants to join forces with you. And we think this would be a really good sort of a situation.

Here's Hezekiah, well, he's honored.

Well, let me just, let me show you around. Because I think I need to kind of confirm to you that you've made a good choice. So let's show you some things. Here's, look at all this. And then here, there's our armory, but whoa, look at you. You're prepared. Yeah. This is a good deal.

I mean, why would you show somebody your armory? That's like taking them into the Pentagon, right? And kind of just opening the doors and saying, here you go, look, there's all our secrets right there.

But that's... And there's a part of this, that you can kind of understand. It's just too easy sometimes to think more of ourselves than we ought when people come along and compliment us and they recognize us for something that we've done or worked hard at or something like that.

And we love to be appreciated, don't you? I like to be appreciated. I think there's different needs in people's lives for being appreciated. I think that's true. But I think all of us like to be recognized. By the way that's called the sin of, the pride of life. It's one of the areas where the enemy attacks - the pride of life. When we have something to be proud about, somebody will come along and flatter us.

And because we, we long for approval and we long for acceptance, especially if we haven't gotten it very much in life.

Boy, I tell you, we can begin to desire that even above the acceptance of God. And pretty soon, I'm a man pleaser, rather than living for God. Pretty soon I'm looking to you; I'm actually fishing for compliments. And if you say something negative about me, I'm crushed. If you say something nice, you build me up, you puff me up a little bit, kind of props me up. If somebody says something nasty about you and you're crushed, that's a good sign that maybe your attention is in the wrong area.

The apostle Paul said, I have died to the world and the world to me. And what that meant is, he could go to a town like Lystra; he could stir up trouble in that town. The people of the town can drag him out to the edge of the town, stone him with stones, leave him under a pile of rocks. Paul can get up after the brothers pray for him, and he can go back into town and keep ministering. (Acts 14:19-20)

Because it's like, hey, whatever. He didn't sit there and crying about how they were rejecting him and, oh, how come the people don't like me? He frankly just, he didn't care. He wasn't doing it to get appreciation from man. He wanted, more than anything else, to please his God. That was his goal.

So I ask you the question, what is your goal in life? Is your goal to please God, first and foremost? And that's not to say that pleasing, your boss or something like that is necessarily a bad thing. You ought to... It's a good thing to work hard if you're an employee, or if you're an employer, to gain the appreciation of your employees and so forth and so on.

But when it becomes this, all consuming passion we get into trouble. And it becomes a danger zone. And something like this comes along and we're swept away. We're just swept into all that is going on.

So what happens after you seek the approval and the acceptance of man, even above God, look what God says through Isaiah as we continue reading in verse 5. It says,

"Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: ⁶ Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord. ⁷ And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you

will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

Wow! Now there's a two part prophecy that's going on here coming from Isaiah. The first part foretells a time when everything that the kings of Judah had amassed in the way of treasures and armaments and all that stuff is going to be carried off to Babylon.

And this must have seemed like a crazy prophecy to Hezekiah in one sense. Because Babylon at this time was not the world power. In fact, they had gotten their nose bloodied several times by the Assyrians. They had risen up against Assyria and been put down repeatedly. So Babylon was looking for people they could get together with and strengthen themselves with. They were not a world power or the world power at this time.

So to hear this statement from the Lord, the day is coming when everything that you have is going to be carried off to Babylon, that must have really seemed pretty wild. But notice how God responds to what Hezekiah had told Isaiah. You'll notice that God said remember... Okay, let me back up.

Isaiah says to Hezekiah, what did you show him?

He says, I showed him all that was in my house. Remember that phrase?

Look what God says in response, we already read it, *“All that is in your house shall be carried to Babylon.”*

In other words, you showed them everything, they will get everything. Wow!

The second part of this prophecy involves Hezekiah's own family, or, at least those who would come from his lineage. And God says here in verse 7, again, *“some of your own sons, who come from you shall be taken away, and there'll be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”* We have scriptural fulfillment of this.

Do you know that Daniel fulfilled this prophecy? Interesting, isn't it? Daniel was a prophet himself, and yet he fulfilled this prophecy, the prophecy of Isaiah. Daniel was of the royal lineage. And he was taken off to Babylon, even before Babylon came and conquered Jerusalem. He was carried off to be one of the advisors of the king of Babylon or whatever. So Daniel is the fulfillment of this statement.

And then we got this crazy response by Hezekiah that ends out the chapter says,

“⁸ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good. (And then we're, it, we're kind of given his explanation) For he thought, “There will be peace and security in my days.””

And, I read this and I'm... It's kind of shocking, that Hezekiah would make a statement like that. It's kind of like saying, gee, I'm glad that's not going to happen while I'm still around. Who cares what happens to the kids? That's their problem. Eh, tough on them sort of a thing. Oh, how nice.

And you got to kind of wonder, I mean, I even looked at this in the original language to see if maybe there were some like really difficult Hebrew here that they had a hard time translating. I don't know, maybe he meant something else. No, I think that's kind of what he meant. He was kind of thinking about himself.

And that happens sometimes, doesn't it? When we start focusing on our own lives and what we've done. And I'm looking for what's good for me and so forth. Pretty soon, I'm just all about me. And if somebody comes along and gives me bad news for my kids, it's like, well, buck up. You'll get through it. We did, sort of a thing. Gee, thanks, Dad.

You have to kind of wonder, don't you? How the history of Judah may have been, turned out somewhat different had there been a king that responded to this prophecy with tears and repentance. Reminds me of a king that's going to come after Hezekiah who's going to be given a very similar prophecy. And that is king Josiah.

And Josiah was an incredibly godly man. Died in the prime of life. But he was a very, very godly man. And he was very much toward the end of the kings of Judah. And by that time, by the time Josiah came to power, God's judgment was just hanging over their heads. And there was nothing they were going to do to change it.

And he received a prophecy that this is a done deal. God is going to judge Judah, and Jerusalem will fall. And this is all going to come to naught. How would you like to be the king? To be a godly king and hear that message? Prophetically.

You know what Josiah did? You, you would think, well, hey, well, I guess we might as well have a party, right? "We might as well have a party and whoop it up. And get drunk and hang out, and do whatever we feel like doing because

we're not going to change it. God said so. No changing it. There's no turning back. Judgment is hanging over Judah.

But that's not what Josiah did. He called the whole nation to a national repentance. And ultimately judgment came. But we are just so impressed by his attitude. And I think as believers we can kind of tend to look at some of the prophecies of the last days and almost take a similar kind of an attitude.

It's like, well, the tribulation is coming, sure, but it doesn't happen in my life sort of a thing. Not that I believe that believers are going to be here for it, but I think we can kind of tend to look at those prophecies that talk about how it goes from bad to worse and kind of go, well, this is what he said.

I mean, the apostle Paul is pretty clear about how life in this world is going to be in the last days. And it's pretty dire. I mean, when you look at the predictions, right? It's pretty dire. It's not, it doesn't look like fun at all. In fact, it looks like life in America today. That's what it looks like: the violence, the brutality, the cruelty, the intense self-centeredness that we are seeing in people today.

And lawlessness, casual lawlessness I never thought, I never thought I would live to see an entire section of downtown Seattle turned over to lawlessness. Where the police are just no longer willing to even go there. Where people call the police when things happen and they don't show up. We lived in Seattle for seven years. Never would have thought; never would have thought it would come to that. But here it is. Here we are.

We can look at it and we can say, "well, okay, what are we going to do?" Are we going to kind of take Hezekiah's attitude and, well, I'm glad the rapture is coming. We'll get out of here before it really gets bad. Or are we going to have that attitude that Josiah had.

I was so impressed last time I taught through the Kings. (1 and 2 Kings) Sue and I were having... That was 23 years ago. And, well, that was probably 2 times ago, when I was teaching through Kings. But we were just having a baby at the time. And I was so impressed with Josiah, we named our last son Timothy Josiah, because I was just, I thought, man, that's the attitude I want to have. Yeah, it's bad. And the prophecies say it's probably going to get worse. But what are we going to do?

We are the salt of the earth. Jesus said that, I didn't. We are the light of the world. Jesus said if the salt loses its saltiness, it's good for nothing. And you do

know that salt is a preserving agent, right? Keeps things from decaying. And our society is decaying.

Now, if we were taken out of here, imagine how quickly the decay is going to take place then. When the salt is removed, the decay is going to literally cave in on itself and that's one of the reasons I believe that the church will be taken prior to the tribulation period, or at least as the tribulation just gets started. But either way, regardless of what you believe, don't let that mess you up.

Today, we're still here. We haven't been taken yet, right? We're still here. So what are we going to do? You say, well, pastor, what can I do? Well, you can pray. We can all pray and we ought to be praying. We ought to be on our knees. We ought to be crying out for our country, for our leadership because we've lost our way as a nation. We've lost our way. Truth has stumbled in the streets and we've lost our way.

And I believe it's incumbent upon the body of Christ to speak truth at a time when truth doesn't want to be heard. But will we keep speaking truth, even when it continually grows in disfavor with the people of this world? I pray that we will.