

# A Prayer, a Sign, and a Savior

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[ 0 : 00 ] 2 Kings 20, verses 1-11, where we read about King Hezekiah's illness and then miraculous recovery from the Lord as he healed him.

! Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, saying, And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

And before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him. Turn back and say to Hezekiah, the leader of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, behold, I will heal you.

On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord, and I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, And I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.

And Isaiah said, Bring a cake of figs and let them take and lay it on the boil that he may recover.

And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord on the third day?

[ 1 : 53 ] And Isaiah said, This will be the sign to you from the Lord that the Lord will do the thing that he has promised. Shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?

And Hezekiah answered, It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps. Rather, let the shadow go back ten steps. And Isaiah the prophet called to the Lord, And he brought the shadow back ten steps, By which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz.

I love the story of King Hezekiah. Just on a superficial level, His life from beginning to end is so compelling.

If you read it slowly, And you really immerse yourself in the story, You can see just how suspenseful it is at times. I don't think Hollywood could write anything better.

In fact, Hezekiah would make a pretty good movie if they could stay faithful to the text. But more than that, I love Hezekiah because, Well, let me ask you this.

[ 3 : 05 ] Have you ever read straight through the historical books of the Old Testament? Samuel, Kings, Chronicles? If you have, then you know how sad and tragic the stories of the kings of Israel and Judah are.

It is one downfall after another. One wicked king after another. One idolater after another. And even when you come to one of the kings who attempts reform in Jerusalem and they cleanse the temple, there's always that line, but the high places were not removed.

So even the reformers, even the kings who set out to direct the people's worship away from false gods, back to Yahweh, never went quite far enough.

They removed the idolatry from Jerusalem, but they allowed it to continue outside of the city. And as Paul would later say, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Their reforms were not quite enough. But then comes King Hezekiah. Now, if I'm not mistaken, Hezekiah was Judah's 13th king following the split between Judah and Israel.

[ 4 : 26 ] So after Saul, David, and Solomon, the kingdom split. And Hezekiah was number 13 in the southern kingdom of Judah. And here's how he's introduced to us in 2 Kings chapter 18.

In the third year of Hashiach, son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.

He was 25 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abbi, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that David, his father, had done.

He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days, the people of Israel had made

offerings to it.

It was called the Neshutam. He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.

[ 5 : 39 ] For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses, and the Lord was with him.

Wherever he went out, he prospered. Now, only one king before Hezekiah is described as being like David, and that was King Asa.

But would you care to venture a guess as to where he fell short? He failed to remove the altars and the idols from the high places.

So Hezekiah really stands out in this long line of kings. He was like David, a man after God's own heart. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

He removed the high places, which again every king had failed to do before him. He cut down the Asherah, which his own father, by the way, King Ahaz, had erected in the temple of all places.

[ 6 : 42 ] Hezekiah even broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made. You remember the bronze serpent? This takes us back to Numbers chapter 21, when the Israelites complained against Moses and ultimately against God in the wilderness.

The Lord sent serpents among the people to bite them and even kill them. And the Lord tells Moses, make a fiery or bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And everyone who is bitten when he sees it shall live.

Well, over time, the Israelites had come to worship this thing. In fact, serpents were often associated with the false goddess Asherah, so maybe they eventually made a connection between the two, I don't know.

But regardless, they had turned this image of God's mercy, it was really a picture of Christ himself, as we learn in John chapter 3, into an idol that they made offerings to.

And I can only imagine the shock of the people when Hezekiah said, it must be destroyed. I mean, this is a significant historical artifact.

[ 7 : 53 ] But obviously, there are more important things to consider than a priceless relic of antiquity. For the glory of God and for the good of the people, that serpent had to be destroyed.

And Hezekiah did it. And let's put Hezekiah in context while we're at it. He was the son of King Ahaz, one of Judah's most wicked rulers.

Scripture says, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God as his father David had done. Ahaz embraced the paganism rampant in the northern kingdom of Israel, building idols and altars to false gods like Baal throughout the land.

He even burned his own son alive as an offering to Molech. After visiting Damascus and seeing a pagan altar there, he ordered a replica to be placed in God's temple in Jerusalem.

Then he went on to plunder all of the gold and silver from the temple to pay tribute to Assyria, making Judah a vassal state of a Gentile nation. So rather than trusting in the Lord for protection, he robbed the Lord's house to essentially protect himself.

[ 9 : 13 ] And eventually, according to 2 Chronicles 28, Ahaz shut up the doors of the house of the Lord. Completely. So over his 16-year reign, he went from supposedly worshiping the one true God to adding all kinds of idols to eventually ending the worship of God altogether.

So how in the world does a godly king like Hezekiah rise up from such an upbringing? He grew up surrounded by idolatry.

A desecrated temple was normal to him. How could he possibly become the man he became? Well, I believe the answer lies in God's sovereign grace.

Hezekiah fell so far from the apple tree because God chose him to be an instrument of reform and called him out of that darkness.

As Jesus would later tell his disciples, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed that you should go and bear much fruit.

[ 10 : 23 ] The same was true for Hezekiah. It wasn't that Hezekiah was smarter or more righteous by nature. The Bible says of kings specifically, the Lord removes kings and sets up kings.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he will. And generally speaking, it is always God who sovereignly, so graciously, calls his people from the darkest places into his marvelous light.

Perhaps the Lord also worked through Hezekiah's mother, Abbi, or Abijah. 2 Kings 18 mentions her. His mother's name was Abbi, the daughter of Zechariah. Obviously, we can't know for certain, but just imagine her grief as she's watching Ahaz burn one of her children to Molech.

Maybe she quietly taught Hezekiah God's laws despite her husband's idolatry. That was true for Timothy in the New Testament.

His father was Greek, but his believing mother and grandmother taught him the scriptures. So for any Christian who's married to an unbeliever, I say take heart.

[ 11 : 41 ] God can use your soul influence to shape your children for his kingdom. As for Hezekiah, one thing is certain.

God sovereignly called him out of darkness and made him a mighty light for the nation. And with that, let's consider our text here in chapter 20.

Look at those first three words. In those days. Now that's easy to gloss over, but it's important because it sets the stage for what follows. The question is, in the days of what?

What event or circumstance is the narrator here pointing to? And for that, we need just a bit more context. So at this point in history, Assyria is the great superpower in the world.

In fact, there's only rare evidence that Assyria, prior to King Hezekiah, ever failed to capture a city when they tried. Sometimes it took longer than others, but they were usually successful.

[ 12 : 44 ] They nearly always conquered. So small nations like Israel and Judah didn't seem to stand a chance, which is why both nations paid tribute to Assyria.

As I mentioned, King Ahaz stripped the temple to continue appeasing the Assyrians to avoid getting destroyed by them. Well, the northern kingdom of Israel had paid off Assyria for years.

However, they eventually stopped, and this led the Assyrians to say, well, that's it. Enough is enough. And they came in, they took control of the entire nation, they captured Samaria, and they deported most of the people.

Now, behind the scenes, of course, this was God's doing. He was judging the people for their sins. If you were to turn back to 2 Kings 17, you'll see they were judged for their idolatry, for their child sacrifices, for rejecting God's prophets, and commingling with other nations.

The text says, and this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God. As for Judah, I stopped short of reading this detail about Hezekiah in chapter 18.

[ 14 : 05 ] It says, he rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. In short, he refused to continue making payments to a Gentile king out of fear.

That's why Israel paid them. That's why King Ahaz of Judah paid them. Rather than trusting the Lord to protect them, they acted out of fear. But Hezekiah refused.

So, in chapter 18, King Sennacherib of Assyria invades Judah, captures its fortified cities, those cities protected by, you know, high walls, if not hills, around the outside, and they set up forces to surround and attack Jerusalem.

You see, once they have Jerusalem, it's all over for Judah. And let's keep in mind what kind of enemy we're dealing with here.

The Assyrians were brutal. Archaeologists have uncovered some of the accounts. They would capture people and seemingly for sport, peel off their skin while they were still alive.

[ 15 : 19 ] they impaled their enemies on stakes outside of the city walls. They stacked their skulls outside so that anyone who would come along, they would be signaled, the Assyrians have been here and they've conquered.

They utilized what we might call psychological warfare. They did everything they could to intentionally instill fear in people. They wanted to terrify their enemies.

Then, they would come in if they needed to attack with some of the most advanced siege weapons of their day. So, with Assyria surrounding Jerusalem, this is really a worst case scenario.

Hezekiah and his people are trapped with nothing to do but wait. But surely, Hezekiah thought, I've trusted in the Lord.

I've followed His law thoroughly. Nothing is too great for our God. Surely, He will save us. In fact, Isaiah prophesied to this effect in chapter 19.

[ 16 : 21 ] Here's what he said. Thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria. He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mount against it.

By the way that he came, by the same he shall return and he shall not come into this city, declares the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David. Well, returning to our text in chapter 20, we read, in those days, Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death.

Now, we don't really know the exact timeline of these events. We're led to believe that Hezekiah fell sick at some point during the Assyrian threat. Did it happen when the Assyrians were still marching toward Jerusalem?

Were they already camped outside of the city walls? We don't know. Either way, the overlap of these crises, the external threat from the Assyrians and Hezekiah's illness really underscores how deeply Hezekiah's faith is tested here.

[ 17 : 37 ] And let's just set aside for a moment all of the typical emotions or fears that one might feel when they're sick and dying. Hezekiah is the leader of the people.

They're facing the biggest threat he's ever known during his reign. Needless to say, this is the worst possible time for him to get sick. If he dies, he doesn't even have a son to take his place.

Who will lead the people? What will they do? We have an expression that we often use that goes, when it rains, it pours.

That's what's happening here. It's like a hurricane that blows in and already devastates the region with its initial impact, but then it stalls. It just sits there and blows and blows and dumps more and more rain on an already devastated part of the country.

This is what Judah faces. Crisis upon crisis. And I believe Hezekiah is painfully aware of this. You see, I've read a lot of commentaries over the years.

[ 18 : 45 ] I've heard a number of sermons on Hezekiah's illness and his subsequent prayer, and I'm always a bit disappointed by those who would accuse Hezekiah of doubt and selfishness here.

Some have accused him of self-righteousness even. They think he's merely scared to die, and he begins pleading with the Lord out of purely self-serving motives, bragging about his own righteousness like the Pharisee who prayed in the temple in Luke 18.

But that's not what's happening here, as we'll see. Surely, Hezekiah is confounded with all he knows. He can't hardly make sense of the Lord ending his life right now.

But even more than that, I believe, he's also thinking about Judah. He's thinking about the promises of God because he believes the promises of God. Namely, he doesn't have an heir.

Not yet. What about the heir of David who is supposed to sit on the throne forever? If Hezekiah dies, how will that promise be fulfilled?

[ 19 : 58 ] And adding to Hezekiah's confusion, maybe even Isaiah's here, it's quite possible that Hezekiah got sick after Isaiah prophesied good news regarding the Assyrians.

So it's possible that the last word they heard from the Lord was good news, and all of a sudden, it's terrible news. What is going on here? Hezekiah is sick.

He's lying on his deathbed. And Isaiah comes to him and says, Thus says the Lord, Set your house in order, for you shall die. You shall not recover.

Twice, he says it. You shall die. You shall not recover. Let me pause here for a moment. Just put yourself in Isaiah's shoes for a second.

Do you think this was easy for him? Don't think for a moment that the prophets of the Old Testament were completely detached from their circumstances.

[ 21 : 00 ] I don't know what you imagine, but you kind of want to picture these guys just going around, Here's a word from the Lord. I'll see you later. These were God-fearing human beings with friends, with a love for the Lord and a love for His people.

And I'm sure the last thing Isaiah wanted to tell Hezekiah was, I'm sorry. The nation will survive, but you will not. I mean, the text isn't explicit about this, but I would not be surprised in the least if Isaiah and Hezekiah were dear friends.

How do you think Isaiah felt about this? I think, I said that he may have been as confused as Hezekiah, but here's the thing.

Genuine love always requires telling the truth, even when that truth is hard. Paul said it, speak the truth in love.

He also said, love rejoices with the truth. It's not love if we avoid the truth. It's not love if we sacrifice the truth. Loving someone means telling them the truth even when it's hard.

[ 22 : 10 ] And notice how practical this word is to Hezekiah. Set your house in order. Get your affairs in order, your material affairs. Do what you need to do because you will die.

Now obviously we are called throughout the Bible to be spiritually prepared for death, but part of that will be manifested through our physical, our practical preparation for death.

And that's, that's just what Isaiah is telling Hezekiah. Get ready because you will die. Of course, leave it to a funeral pre-planning advisor to tell you that.

So the word from the Lord is this. Hezekiah, you will die. You will not recover from this illness. If I've done the math correctly, Hezekiah is only 39 years old at the time.

So he's in the prime of his life. We've already established he's a righteous man. He's a king like no other. And what does a righteous king do when he receives such devastating, confounding news?

[ 23 : 19 ] Verse 2. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, saying, Now, O Lord, please 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 wept bitterly. So he did what he always did in times of trouble. He went to the Lord to lay those troubles at the Lord's feet.

Now, in the past, he went as close to the throne as possible. He went to the temple to cast his burdens on the Lord. But obviously, he couldn't do that here. He's bedridden. So the best he can do is turn his head for a measure of privacy.

Some have speculated that he was turning his face toward the temple, but I think the most natural reading is that he's turning away from Isaiah to be alone with God as much as possible.

That's precisely how we should respond to any crisis, to any trouble, to any degree of severity. The first step is not to brainstorm a solution.

[ 24 : 34 ] It's not to mull it over for a few days. It is to rush to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The first and most critical step is always to turn to the Lord in prayer. And that's what Hezekiah does.

Now, I'll address his specific prayer, but this is, I believe, a righteous response from a righteous man. I simply can't understand the commentators who assume Hezekiah had only self-serving motives.

This is not the frantic, self-centered prayer of someone who's desperately clinging to his earthly life. No, everything we've learned about Hezekiah up to this point in Scripture would suggest that this is a sincere outpouring of his heart, a heart, as he himself says, wholly devoted to God.

He's struggling to understand, yes. He's confused, yes, but this, I believe, is an authentic, albeit very painful, prayer of a faithful man.

[ 25 : 50 ] I think the problem is that we may see this prayer as Hezekiah bargaining with God. Look how righteous I am, Lord. Surely, you won't take my life.

But that's an unfortunate misunderstanding. Hezekiah isn't boasting about himself. He's appealing to his covenant relationship with God.

Think about this. How many times in the Old Testament did God say, if you keep this covenant with me, remaining faithful to me, and obeying my commands, I will bless you.

I will prosper you. And there's the even more specific covenant that God made with David. The Lord said to David, I have made a covenant with my chosen one.

I have sworn to David my servant. I will establish your offspring forever and build your throne for all generations. And I believe Hezekiah maybe has all of this running through his mind.

[ 26 : 55 ] God repeatedly promised to reward obedience with life and blessings. He also said he would punish disobedience with curses and death. And it's on that covenantal basis that Hezekiah appeals to his sincere faithfulness as a reason for God's favor.

We find the same plea in many of the Psalms. Hezekiah is essentially saying, Lord, I've walked before you wholeheartedly. He's not presuming perfection by the way.

And I only ask that you remember me. Not because I deserve it, but because of your own covenant. And if we doubt his sincerity or the fact that God is pleased with his prayer, notice what the Lord later says.

I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. And then what does he do? He answers that prayer. He's pleased with Hezekiah.

He is pleased by this humble, dependent plea of a righteous man. And as James writes, the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

[ 28 : 12 ] And no sooner than Isaiah left Hezekiah, the Lord stops him, tells him to turn around, go back, he says, and tell Hezekiah, thus says the Lord, the God of David, your father, I have heard your prayer.

I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. Notice here how the Lord makes reference to David. He spells it out clearly when he says, I will add 15 years to your life.

I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.

For the sake of the Davidic covenant. For the Lord's glory in keeping that covenant, not to mention for David to whom that promise was first made and all of his descendants, God will spare Hezekiah's life.

So Hezekiah in part appeals to that promise and God answers by saying, yes, I will keep that promise. You've kept the covenant.

[ 29 : 25 ] I will keep the covenant. Isn't that how covenants are supposed to work? Now, we don't want to misunderstand this as God not having any concern for Hezekiah himself, the man, the individual.

It's just that his will for Hezekiah is wrapped up in an even greater purpose. In fact, the Davidic covenant itself wasn't just about David.

It was about God's sovereign plan, a plan foreordained before the foundation of the world to bring salvation through the sinless life, the atoning death, and the resurrection of David's descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, if Hezekiah dies without a son, David's proper lineage ends. The promise fails.

If Hezekiah dies here, Christ is never born according to God's word, salvation never comes, and God's made a liar. So, yes, God's reversal here is about Hezekiah.

[ 30 : 31 ] It's an answer to his prayer. God is rewarding his faithfulness in a sense, but it's about so much more than Hezekiah. And perhaps we should think about that regarding ourselves.

Maybe our troubles and any subsequent prayers the Lord answers aren't just about us. Maybe they're part of a much bigger unfolding plan of God.

In fact, I'm sure of it. Now, the big question that often comes up with a passage like this is, did God change his mind?

How can that be? First, he warns Hezekiah he will die, then he announces that Hezekiah will live another 15 years. Isn't God contradicting himself? Well, at first glance, it certainly seems like God changed his mind, but the Bible consistently teaches that God's character and purposes never change.

God cannot change. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. With God, there is no variation or shadow due to change. His will and his decrees are as fixed as his character.

[ 31 : 49 ] So, how do we explain this? Well, the first thing to note is the difference between a warning from God and a decree of God.

When God tells Hezekiah he will die, that is a warning, but understand that many of God's warnings are not articulated as these conditional statements as we might expect.

He doesn't necessarily say, if you do this or don't do this, then bad things will come. Instead, we only get the latter part in some cases, the consequence.

For example, think of the people of Nineveh. Jonah was told to tell them, yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. But see, the condition is really implied in that.

If you don't change, then Nineveh will be overthrown. Yet immediately, the text shows in Jonah chapter three, and the people of Nineveh believed God.

[ 32 : 52 ] God. You see, God didn't decree the destruction of Nineveh. Otherwise, Nineveh would have been destroyed. Instead, he decreed that Jonah would go to them, preach his word, warn them of impending doom, and use Jonah and his message as a means to bring about their repentance.

In other words, God decreed the outcome their repentance, but he also decreed the means by which they would repent, which included his warning.

Similarly, that's what happens in the case of Hezekiah. The warning, you will die, puts Hezekiah's resolve, his faithfulness, his trust in the promises of God, and his dependence on God to the test,

and he passed.

And it was through that warning, and it was through that test, and it was through Hezekiah's prayer that God accomplished his foreordained decree to save Hezekiah and allow him to see the defeat of the Assyrians.

And by the way, that's how Hezekiah saw it. There's a parallel account of this story in Isaiah 38.

And in Isaiah's account, we're told that Hezekiah wrote a psalm after his recovery.

[ 34 : 21 ] And here's what he writes. This is just a part of it. Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness. That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it?

The sickness, the prospect of dying, the word from God that he would die, the bitter tears. Hezekiah says it was all for my welfare. God used all of that bitterness as a means of his salvation.

Next, we're told that Hezekiah asked for a sign. And like his prayer, we may be tempted to see this as evidence of doubt or perhaps worse, but this is not the demand of an unbelieving, hard-hearted, self-righteous Pharisee after he's already been given sign after sign after sign like we see in the days of Jesus.

And I know that's probably where our minds tend to go. This is a weak, yes, weak, yet faithful man who, by the way, is still lying sick and suffering in his bed.

His health hasn't been restored yet. Asking for a sign not to test God but to gain assurance. He's pleading for assurance here.

[ 35 : 47 ] And I want to note a point of contrast. Going back to the story of his father Ahaz, in Isaiah chapter 7, Judah is threatened by a different enemy.

And Isaiah comes to Ahaz and says, be careful, be quiet, do not fear. You see, the Lord was promising to protect Judah, if only Ahaz would trust him.

And the Lord says, ask a sign of the Lord your God. Let it be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. The Lord says, I'll prove it to you. Ask for any sign you want and I'll do it.

The sky is the limit. I'll give you any sign you want. And here's what Ahaz says, I will not ask and I will not put the Lord to the test.

Now that sounds innocent enough, right? We shouldn't put the Lord to the test. But remember, this was God's offer to him.

[ 36 : 52 ] Ahaz didn't need to demand a sign because the Lord offered to give him a sign. And as we discover, Ahaz refused only because he didn't believe. He didn't believe that sign was coming.

He didn't trust the Lord and he chose instead to handle the matter himself by surprise, surprise, forming a so-called alliance with the Assyrians. Now getting back to Hezekiah, you'll notice that it wasn't Hezekiah who said, Lord, if you'll really restore my life, I want to see a big sign.

I want you to move the sun or at the very least reverse the rotation of the earth. He didn't demand any sign in particular. Lord, just give me some assurance.

I'm still sick. I'm still in this bed. I'm still weak. I'm confused. Strengthen my resolve. Give me confidence in your word. Do you see the difference between Ahaz and Hezekiah?

At first glance, it seems Ahaz had the right response while Hezekiah was seeking a sign that he shouldn't have been seeking. But it's just the opposite.

[ 38 : 06 ] The Lord offered Ahaz a sign, but he refused because he rejected God himself. Then Hezekiah is striving as he always has to trust the Lord and he simply asks for a sign of assurance.

And by the way, the Lord wants to give his people assurance. And that's precisely what he does for Hezekiah in a big way. By the way, God did give Ahaz a sign, whether he wanted it or not.

And I love this. Here's what he said. This is Isaiah 7. The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

Who is that son? He's none other than Jesus Christ. Emmanuel, God with us. And what about Hezekiah's sign?

Well, I believe it too points to the Savior. Think about this. Hezekiah is a man with a death sentence.

[ 39 : 20 ] The world around him is collapsing. His enemies are hemming him in on every side and he is utterly powerless to stop it. Can you relate?

Hebrews 9.27, it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment. But, like his unbelieving father, unlike his unbelieving father, I should say, Hezekiah turns to his only hope, his only salvation, the Lord himself, praying and weeping bitterly.

Luke 18.13, but the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Luke 23.42, and the thief on the cross said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Romans 10.13, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Hezekiah appeals to God's covenant promise. 2 Corinthians 1.20, for all the promises of God find their yes in him.

[ 40 : 48 ] That is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory. Or Hebrews 10.23, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Hezekiah was saved. Not on the basis of anything he did. He had nothing to offer on his death bed. Yes, he spoke of his righteousness, his trust, his wholeheartedness, but he is ultimately helpless. What could he possibly do? He's dying. So he's saved. Why? Because the Lord is merciful. Ephesians 2.4 and 5. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved.

Titus 3.4 and 5. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.

[ 42 : 02 ] And what did God give Hezekiah in the end? Life. Life followed by the assurance of that life that Hezekiah could not yet see.

Not in that deathbed. John 10.28, I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Or Romans 6.23, for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is what? Eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 1.13 and 14.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

So the God who heard Hezekiah's bitter prayers and gave him life, who defended Jerusalem against impossible odds and keeps his covenant promises by sending Christ, this same God is still faithful.

[ 43 : 19 ] He is still merciful. And while he may not always save us from our temporal troubles as he did Hezekiah, he will save anyone and everyone who calls on his name from our greatest threat of all, eternal judgment.

As Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord, you are faithful and true. You are the God who spoke the world into existence and who sustains it by the word of your power.

You are merciful beyond measure. You're patient with us. You're steadfast in your promises. There is no one like you. And we give you glory for your sovereignty over kings and kingdoms and even over our lives.

Father, we confess that we too often have failed to turn to you in our times of trouble. We've trusted in ourselves or in the things of this world. Lord, forgive us.

[ 44 : 37 ] Have mercy on us for our many sins. We thank you for the mercy that is ours in Jesus Christ. We thank you that though we were dead in our trespasses, you made us alive together with him.

Thank you for hearing our bitter prayers, for remembering us in our weaknesses, for granting us eternal life with you. Thank you for the cross where Christ bore our judgment and for the empty tomb that proves your promises never fail.

Father, help us now to trust in you in all the trials we may face. Strengthen our faith when our hearts grow weak. Teach us to pray as Hezekiah prayed, not out of fear, but out of confidence in your covenant love.

I'd ask that you would work in the hearts of those who might be here today who do not yet know you. Open their eyes to see their greatest need, that their greatest provision is in Christ.

Save them, Lord. And as we sing now of your mercy, let our hearts rise with gratitude and hope. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.