

Fifteen More Years

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 April 2012

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Isaiah chapter 38. We're going to read the entire chapter. Isaiah 38. In those days, Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death.

! The prophet Isaiah, son of Amos, went to him and said, this is what the Lord says. Put your house in order because you are going to die. You will not recover.

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord. Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.

And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah. Go and tell Hezekiah. This is what the Lord, the God of your father David says.

I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will add 15 years to your life and I will deliver you and the city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend the city. This is what the Lord signed to you. This is the Lord signed to you that the Lord will do what he has promised.

[1:16] I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz. And so the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down.

A writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, after his illness and recovery. I said, in the prime of my life, must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?

I said, I will not again see the Lord, the Lord in the land of the living. No longer will I look on mankind or be with those who now dwell in this world.

Like a shepherd's tent, my house has been pulled down and taken from me. Like a weaver, I have rolled up my life and he has cut me off from the loom.

Day and night you made an end of me. I waited patiently till dawn, but like a lion he broke all my bones. Day and night you made an end of me.

[2:19] I cried like a swift or a thrush. I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled, O Lord.

Come to my aid. But what can I say? He has spoken to me and he himself has done this. I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul.

Lord, by such things men live and my spirit finds life in them, too. You restored me to health and let me live. Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish.

In your love, you kept me from the pit of destruction. You have put all my sins behind your back for the grave cannot praise you. Death cannot sing your praise. Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.

The living, the living, they praise you as I am doing today. Father, fathers tell their children about your faithfulness. The Lord will save me and he will sing and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the Lord.

[3:28] Isaiah had said, prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boil and he will recover. However, Hezekiah had asked, what will be the sign that I will go up to the temple of the Lord?

Do you know your number? Have you seen that advertisement? Some financial investment firm and everybody's carrying around this big number and it stands for the number of dollars you need in order to retire.

Do you know your number? They asked. Well, I'm going to ask you a different question that's kind of like that. Do you know your date? Your date. What do you mean?

Well, I mean, when you visit a cemetery and you look at the gravestones, you see two dates on the gravestones. The first one's the birth date. And after a dash, there is the death date.

And every one of us have a death date. Do you know your number, your death date? Psalm 139, 16 tells us we all have one.

[4:39] All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. So your number was fixed before you were ever born.

It cannot be changed. You will not live one day longer than that number. Job 14, 5 says man's days are determined. You have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed. Now, your death date is recorded then in God's book. But the reality is he's not published that book, has he? Nor has he let us peek into its pages to find our number.

However, it remains closed to us, but it's an open book to him. Hezekiah had a death date, too. Did God change it? Did God go back to the book and erase it and add 15 years? No, not at all. No one can exceed the limits that God has established.

[5:52] All the days ordained for him were written in God's book before one of them came to be. And God in his book of decrees. Included in his decree.

Hezekiah's sickness. Hezekiah's prayer. And the 15 years that God would give him after his illness. Well, we'll come to that. But we're here in Isaiah 38 to learn about the issues then of life and of death. And about our great God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.

And we see today yet another test of faith for Hezekiah, king of Judah. I wonder if we figured it out by now that God is ever testing our faith.

He's always putting us into situations that are way over our heads. Where we feel we're out of our league in this. We feel overwhelmed. We don't know what to do.

[6:57] We don't have enough resources of our own to meet the demands of this problem. God is behind every one of those situations. And he's up to something good.

As we'll see this morning. But the question is always the same in these tests. Will we turn to him in faith? If so, he will act on our behalf.

He's out to prove how real he is in your real world with your real problems. Now for Hezekiah, the problem was not the threatening Assyrian army.

Now it's a life-threatening disease. Not a national problem, but now a very personal one. There are many reasons for believing that the events of chapter 38 happened before the events of chapters 36 and 37.

Even though Isaiah tells us about them later. The prophets did not always write their chapters in chronological order. And I believe that's true of what we have here this morning.

[8:08] The first verse says, In those days. It's a very indefinite reference to time. In those days of when Hezekiah was king of Judah. Judah, this happened.

And we see in verse 6 that the Assyrian threat was still very much alive. Because one of the promises was that God would deliver this city from the Assyrians. So the threat is still alive. It seems it happened before the 185,000 were killed. And Sennacherib packed up and went home. So you're in the doctor's office to hear the result of the recent tests that he's taken.

And he or she comes in and drops the bomb that you're not long for this world. You have a terminal illness and it's in the final stages. What do you do?

In those days, Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The point of death.

[9:11] He got sick and this time he didn't get better. He only grew worse until he was at death's door and it was swinging open to receive him. At any moment now, he'll breathe his last.

Now that's not just his own hunch about the matter. It's not even the diagnosis of the palace doctors. It's rather the word of the Lord that Isaiah brought to him.

This is what the Lord says. Put your house in order because you are going to die. You will not recover. What do you do now?

It seems that Hezekiah was in the mid to late 30s. What he calls the prime of his life. And yet his time's already up.

People in their 30s usually are not planning their funerals. The expectation is that they have a lot more years to live. They've got a lot more to do.

[10:16] And so it was for King Hezekiah. He's no different from us in that. If we suddenly realized we were going to die in our 30s.

And so we have Hezekiah's prayer. And if we learn anything from Hezekiah's life in these chapters, let's learn from him to run to God first in all of our troubles. When the Assyrian field commander first came threatening to destroy Jerusalem, Hezekiah ran up to the temple and prayed.

Then later, when the threat had continued and a letter came from King Sennacherib, it was to the temple. Letters spread out before him. And he prayed to his God.

And now in this trial, when he hears this time on earth is over, and he's too sick to go up to the temple, we're told he turned his face to the wall.

And he prayed. He prayed. He turns away from all that may distract him in his room. And all the courtiers and doctors.

[11:25] And he turns to the wall that he might have a personal word with God. Be alone with his God without any distractions. And he pours out his broken heart to the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus shed his blood to give us instant access into God's presence. Wherever we are. Whatever's happening to us. Just as he turned his face to the wall and met with God.

We can meet with God wherever we're at. I remember one mother that was so distracted with her children that she would just pull her apron up over her head and have a moment with God there.

Let us learn in our troubles to seek the Lord. Remember, oh, Lord.

[12:25] Verse three, how I've walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes. Now, that was all true. He's not puffed up with pride and thinking more highly of himself than he ought.

You can go back to second Kings chapter 20 and read. That's God's assessment of him. But he served the Lord with all of his heart. He was a great king in that he served the Lord.

And I don't believe he's trying here to bargain. God, these are my bargaining chips. God, I was so good. Now you owe me some more life. Now, I don't believe that's the spirit in which he's dealing. I rather believe that he's grappling with real issues that greatly tormented him. Think of several of the issues he's dealing with. First of all, natural grief.

It's a natural thing to not want to die. Death is unnatural. Life is the way God made us. Death came into the world.

[13:24] Death is the intruder. Death takes from us what God gave to us. And so it's natural to want to live. And especially if you're only in your 30s.

But there's far more than this that Hezekiah was wrestling with. The old covenant blessings for the obedient and for the faithful often included the promise of long life.

That if you are faithful, God will give you long life. Deuteronomy 6 to fear the Lord, your God, as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you so that you may enjoy long life.

Now, that's the Bible that Hezekiah is reading. Many, many passages could say the same word. He's promised to prolong their days. The word of God to Solomon.

If you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David, your father, did, I will give you a long life. So long life was not only the promise given to the righteous, but on the other hand, to be cut down in the prime of life was viewed as a curse for the wicked in the old covenant.

[14:39] You remember the curse? You remember when Samuel was sleeping in the trying to sleep in the temple and he heard the voice of God? Samuel, Sam. And finally, he realized it was the Lord and he said, speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

You remember what God announced to Samuel? He announced the curse of Eli's household. Eli's wicked house was cursed. And one part of the curse was this.

All your descendants will die in the prime of life. You see, that was an opposite to the blessing of long life. And I think it's clear that Hezekiah is agonizing with more than just his death.

But he fears that it is death under God's wrath and displeasure for his sins. It's one thing to die. But it's another thing to face God in judgment for it's appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment.

And it seems he's afraid. God, why are you cutting me down in my prime? Are you saying that I'm one of the wicked? Are you saying I've offended you and my sins are before your face? And so he's fearful.

[15:50] Why no long life for me? Am I not one of the blessed? Am I one of the cursed? And it also seems that Hezekiah had no heir at this time. You can read in 2 Kings chapter 21 that his son Manasseh came to the throne as a 12 year old.

Hezekiah is to live 15 more years. That means it will be 3 more years before his son Manasseh will be born. So it seems he's childless.

And that itself, to die childless in the old covenant, was often viewed as a severe judgment of God. You can see that in Leviticus 20. You see it in Hannah's prayer for a child.

You see it in Luke 1, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elizabeth says, when John the Baptist is born to her in her old age, finally you have taken away my disgrace. But it would be especially grievous for a king in the line of David to die childless.

Since it would mean the end of the line of kings from which the promised Messiah was to come. Could this be the greatest reason for the bitterness and anguish of Hezekiah's tear?

[17:04] He's grappling with God's attitude towards him. Is it in favor or is it wrath? Am I blessed by him or am I cursed by him? And what will happen to the promise to David that he would have a seed, a descendant on his throne forever and ever?

And so I say his prayer is really quite remarkable in the light of what the Lord has told him. You are going to die. You will not recover. And yet he prays. I dare say we don't pray when we have less discouragements to pray.

If ever there were discouragements to pray, it was the Lord's word. You're not getting better. And we'd say, what's the use of pray? But not Hezekiah.

He turns his face to the wall and he cries to God. It seems so final. You're going to die. You're not getting better. Get your house in order.

It was like a nail in the coffin to him. And yet he did pray and it proved not to be final. It wasn't final.

Was it after all? Hezekiah knew something about God that Moses knew about God.

[18:13] Do you remember when Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments the first time? And there was the golden calf. And there they were worshiping around the golden calf.

And God says, leave me alone, Moses, so that my anger may burn against them, that I may destroy them. Period. Then I will make another nation out of you.

That sounds final, doesn't it? Leave them alone so I can destroy them. The threat was clear. No condition was stated. And yet Moses prayed.

And he found God was gracious. And he did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. The Lord was willing to be entreated, even though it appeared that he was not.

And so the Lord's announced threats were sometimes conditional, even though the condition was not spoken. Jeremiah 18, 7 through 10.

[19:19] If at any time, this is the way that God works, he says. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed.

If that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

So Jonah, the prophet, is sent to Nineveh to announce what? Judgment. Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed.

Period. There's no conditions. It's final. It sounds final. But you remember, the whole of Nineveh went into repentance. And because they repented, God relented and did not send the disaster he had planned.

And so here Hezekiah prays, even though his serious illness points to death, even though God's word seems to suggest that he might as well forget about praying.

[20:18] Verse 9 tells us that after this whole ordeal was over and he'd recovered from his illness. He sat down and he wrote a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for his deliverance.

Much like Jonah did after he was saved from drowning in chapter 2. He writes that song to celebrate the deliverance of God. And so verses 10 through 14 are part of that that song of praise, this poem.

And it's like a window into Hezekiah's heart. You get to see what was he thinking with his face turned to the wall. What else was he saying as he prayed to God?

And we see the thoughts he was wrestling with. And it fills out the picture for us. Let's see what we can learn about life and death from Hezekiah. Well, we learn that death sometimes comes knocking when we least expect it.

Even in the prime of life. Notice verse 10. I said in the prime of my life, must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my life or my years?

[21:27] Hezekiah had some more things to do on the to do list. More things to accomplish in his life as a king, as a good king in Judah. There's much to do. And it's hard to be deprived of the rest of his life that would have been the normal expectancy for any 30-something.

We learn from Hezekiah. We're only given today. And maybe not all of it. Today. And maybe not all of it.

So we're not to boast about tomorrow because we don't know what one day will bring for us. And therefore, God gives us life one day at a time. Or even one breath at a time.

And that's all we know that we have. So may the Lord teach us to number our days aright. That we may gain a heart of wisdom. We might see just how tenuous our days are.

We don't know about tomorrow. That is to weigh in on how we spend today. That we might make the most of this day. Don't put off for tomorrow any repenting, any obedience you may not have tomorrow.

[22 : 38] Do it today. Another thing we learn is that death robs us of the enjoyments that are ours in the land of the living.

This is the land of the living. And we had a lot of enjoyments this week, didn't we? In the land of the living. So did Hezekiah. And death robs us of those enjoyments.

Here we see what Hezekiah's greatest enjoyments were in life. God and people in that order. Verse 11.

I said, I will not again see the Lord. The Lord in the land of the living. What's he mean? How has he seen the Lord here in the land of the living? He saw him when he went up to the temple to worship him.

Remember David's words in Psalm 63 and verse 2. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. And I dare say you who know the Savior know exactly what Hezekiah was saying.

[23 : 48] What David was saying. It's in the temple. It's in the worship of God. And God brings His word to you and the power of the Spirit.

And you see God with the eye of faith. Not some image. But you see who God is. You see more of His glory and His power. And Hezekiah says, That experience is no longer to be mine.

That tremendous joy of coming in with the worshiping people and seeing God in the land of the living. Right here. And nor will I enjoy the people in my life.

God made us social people. He made us for relationships with one another. And death would separate Him from the people in His life. No longer will I look on mankind or be with those who now dwell in the world.

And the severing of those ties is not something we take lightly. As we read this poem of Hezekiah, it's clear that he thought he was a goner.

[24 : 55] I'm not going to have this anymore. It's over for me. I'm done. He expects nothing but death. As one utterly helpless before, he views death as a thief taking from him his experience of God and man in the land of the living.

And he uses two word pictures to teach this. To teach us that life can quickly and easily be taken from us. That's another lesson we learn. Quickly and easily gone.

So there's the shepherd's tent. And it's set up for a while and then it's moved on to another place where there's grass to graze the sheep. And there it is.

It's sitting there. It's been there for a while perhaps. And then all of a sudden the shepherd just pulls a few stakes and the whole thing comes down in a matter of minutes.

And it's gone. That's our life. Or he says it's like a cloth that a weaver weaves on the loom. And there's our life like that cloth on the loom.

[26 : 03] And day after day it grows longer. There's all the threads that feed into the loom. And it's being woven. And the cloth is coming out. And as it comes out he rolls it up.

And it gets longer and longer until finally the weaver decides the cloth is long enough. And he takes his scissors and in a few snips it's gone. He cuts it off from the loom.

It's severed from the threads. There's such a finality about it. And yet it was all so quick and so easy. That is my life. He says.

And Hezekiah sees God as the weaver. He's the one who cuts him off from the loom. He says. My times are in your hands. And day and night you make an end of me.

At night waiting with longing for the dawn. Only to find that when it arrives there is no relief. But like a lion he broke all my bones.

[27 : 06] Day and night you made an end of me. You see. His fear again. Of God. God seen as the crushing lion.

He was afraid God was angry with him for his sin. That must be why I'm being cut down in the middle of my life. And not enjoying the promised long life for the blessed.

For the obedient. No wonder there's such anguish in his death. He's not just fearing death. But he's fearing death under the wrath of God.

And all that follows death under his wrath. To die with your sins. Unforgiven. That's what he's fearing.

You know there's probably some here this morning that ought to be. Losing sleep at night with Hezekiah. Afraid. What will it mean to die and face my God with my sins in His face?

[28:10] Unforgiven. And yet he cries. Sometimes his voice is not in words.

He sounds more like a bird. Like a mourning dove moaning out. His cry to the Lord. I'm troubled. Oh Lord.

Come to my aid. And with that he lets us into his inner thoughts. That's what he was praying as he looked toward the wall.

On his sick bed. Though it was a weak and a powerless moan for help. Yet that prayer found its way into the ear of God. And he answered that prayer.

He showed his willingness. To hear and answer. And to spare Hezekiah. Notice God's answer. He sends his word again to Isaiah.

[29:08] Go tell Hezekiah. Verse 4. This is what the Lord. The God of your father David says. I have heard your prayer. And I've seen your tears. I will add 15 years to your life.

And I will deliver you and this city. From the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city. So our God's not like the idols. Who have eyes that cannot see.

Ears that cannot hear. A heart that is not moved. And a hand that can do nothing to save. No. He hears our cries. He sees. Even counts our tears.

His heart is moved. With what moves our hearts. And he acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

This is your God dear believer.

This is him. Look to the Lord in his strength. Seek his face always. And so from man's perspective. God added 15 years to his life.

[30:08] Because from man's perspective. It seemed like it was over. He was at the point of death. And God says. I'll add 15 years. And after you've added the 15 years.

That was the date. That was the number. In God's book. Before the creation of the world. But hear this. If Hezekiah had not prayed.

He'd have died 15 years earlier. You say what? If He hadn't prayed. God would not have answered his prayer.

That's what He says. He says. I've heard your prayer. And because of it. I've added. I've answered your prayer. You see. You see. In God's decree.

That He would have this many years. To live. God also decreed. That when He got sick. He would pray. And He also decreed.

[31:06] That He would answer that prayer. And add 15 years to His life. Do you see the place of prayer? Brothers and sisters. It's woven right into the fulfillment.

Of God's eternal decrees. God decrees this. And yet. Your prayers count. They matter. It is through your praying. That He brings about. His decrees.

A mystery. That is. Here's the great weaver. On the loom. Who weaves our prayers. And his answers. As the means. To fulfill his own decrees.

And he answers. Not because Hezekiah deserved it. But. Because of his faithfulness. To his covenant commitments. To David. You see that. He refers in verse 5. I am the God of your father. David. Because I promised David. That a descendant of his. Would always be on the throne. Of Israel. And I also promised. To deliver Jerusalem.

[32:01] The city of David. From the Assyrians. And so though. A cake of figs. Was applied to the boil. The healing was all of God.

It's stated over and over. In this chapter. It was God. Not the figs. God. Not the figs. Who added 15 years. To his life. I will add. And he says.

You restored my health. And gave me life. All healing. Is from God. Whether he uses. Means. Medical. Or none at all.

He is. The God. Of health. He's the God. Of life. And healing. And he not only gives him.

A promise of 15 years. He gives him a sign. He adds a confirming sign. To assure Hezekiah. That he means to do. All that he's promised to do. For Hezekiah.

[32 : 59] What a sign it was. An amazing sign. For an amazing promise. Now verse 22. Tells us. Afterwards. That. That Hezekiah. Had asked for a sign.

Now there's two ways. That you can ask for. That were. That people ask for signs. There's the negative way. When someone didn't believe God. And demanded proof.

Oh that was tempting. And. Testing God. And it came under. His strong. Disapproval. But there was a positive way. That men asked for signs.

When they did believe. God's promise. But they were asking. For further strengthening. Of their faith. Kind of like that man. In the gospels.

Who said Lord. I believe. Would you help. My unbelief. That's different. Than the Jews. Who said. We don't believe.

[33 : 55] Who you say you are. Prove it to us. That's. Disgusting. In God's sight. Hezekiah. Comes as one. Who believes. And yet. Lord.

Would you strengthen. My faith. With a sign. Now. All along. Isaiah. Is contrasting. Hezekiah. With his father.

Ahaz. The earlier. King of Judah. Remember. In his crisis. Of faith. God came to him. With a promise. And then he said. To. To King. Ahaz.

Ask me. For a sign. Ahaz. Oh no. Not. Not me. I won't ask you. For a sign. He didn't want. To believe. He didn't want. God. To strengthen. Faith in him.

He rejected. God's sign. Here's Hezekiah. God's made. An amazing. Promise to him. And he says. Lord. I believe. Would you. Help.

[34 : 48] My. Unbelief. And God. Was pleased. With his request. And was willing. To stoop. Down. To strengthen. The faith.

Of his. Trusting. Child. He even. Gave him. The choice. Of a sign. You want. A sign. You choose. What it will be. We find. This back. In. In. Second. Kings.

Chapter 20. Fills out. The story. For us. That God. Through. Isaiah. Had promised. The nearly. Dead. Hezekiah. That in. Three days. He would be. Healed. And go up. To the temple.

To praise. The Lord. And hezekiah. Ask. What will be. The sign. That the Lord. Will heal me. And that I will. Go up. To the temple. And God.

Says. You choose. Shall. The shadow. Go forward. Ten steps. Or shall. It go. Back. Ten steps. You tell me.

[35 : 41] What the sign. Should be. Now. We don't have a lot of detail about this stairway of Ahaz. Evidently it was a precursor to some of the modern Timex watches.

But it seemed there was a flight of steps. That in some way had some obstacle in front of it. And the sun would cast a shadow upon those steps. And so as the sun was going up or going down.

It would cast this moving shadow. And they used the steps to tell time. And hezekiah says. Well Lord it's easy. To make the shadow go forward.

It's always going forward. But it would be hard. To make it go backwards. So. I choose that you turn back.

The hands of time. Okay. If that's what you want. That's what you will have. And that's exactly what he did. The sunlight went back.

[36 : 37] The ten steps. It had gone down. There's symbolism in that. He's increasing. The amount of time.

Is the picture we have. He's increasing the amount of time. For Hezekiah. To live. And we'll see. In chapter 39. That he was going to do the same thing for Jerusalem.

He's going to give a reprieve of his judgment of Jerusalem. And give them more time. And it's all seen in this sign. As God turns back. The hands of time.

Now how did God do this? Well. The normal movement of the shadow. Is the result of the earth rotating on its axis. But it doesn't necessarily mean.

That God had to take the earth that was rotating. And stop it. And make it rotate in reverse. He could have. He would have had to do a whole lot more.

[37 : 36] To keep us from flying off. And to keep us on that earth. He could do that. No problem to him. We don't know what he did. It may be that he just bent. Supernaturally bent.

The light. Or the shadow. What we do know. It wasn't natural. In fact. Hezekiah made it the most unnatural thing. To make it go backwards.

And so God. Supernaturally. Gives him this sign. Because God was supernaturally going to heal him. And add 15 years. That had never been.

Had God not done it. God's in control of all time. He exists outside of time.

But he's in control. Of all time. He's in control of Hezekiah's life. The time of his life. He's in control of your life. Our times are in his hands.

[38:31] And he has power over the grave. He's able to snatch. From the very doors. Of. Of. Of. The grave. And. In our Lord Jesus. We see that he's even able.

To reach down into the grave. And to bring. One back. Now. Lest we go home with the wrong application.

The point is not to go home and ask God. To turn back time. Or to ask him for signs. For that matter. Jesus says that we already have the ultimate sign.

In his resurrection from the dead. On the third day. We have the finished work of Jesus Christ to look to. That Hezekiah never had. To assure our faith.

That whatever God has promised. He will do. He has died according to the scriptures. He has been buried according to the scriptures. He has risen from the dead.

[39:26] According to the scriptures. What do you find in the scriptures? In the resurrection of Jesus. The life. Death. And burial. And resurrection of Jesus. We have all the sign that we need.

To strengthen our faith. That God will do whatever He has promised. How firm a foundation. You saints of the Lord. Is laid for your faith.

In His excellent word. And now it's completed. All 66 books are ours. Hezekiah had a tiny little bit of it. We've got it all. What more can He say than to you?

He hath said. To you who. For refuge to Jesus have fled. No. We don't ask for signs. We look to that great sign in the gospel.

And we believe that the God who kept His word. In raising our Savior from the dead. Will keep every promise. That He's ever made. So it's Hezekiah.

[40:25] Who saw the shadow go backward. And saw the shadow of death. Chased away. And his healing. Writing about it later. He says. He's beside himself.

What shall I say? He says in verse 15. He's spoken to me. And he himself has done it. He's done what he said he would do. We really do live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

If He says it. It's going to happen. He's saying. You restored me to health. And let me live. And then we learn the next lesson. That the afflictions of believers are for our benefit. For our benefit.

Verse 17. Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. He didn't see that at the time. He's crying his eyes out. In his bed.

Thinking it's over. But as he looks back. He says. You know. With hindsight. I see that. Those days spent on my deathbed. Were beneficial to me.

[41:22] I'm better off because of it. I'm a better man today. Because of those moments of anguish. Of soul. Isn't that what David said? It was good for me.

To be afflicted. So that I might learn your decrees. Before I was afflicted. I went astray. But now. I obey your word. And if you're going through affliction.

And anguish of soul. As a Christian. You can know that it's for your well-being. That all this is happening to you. It's something needful.

It's something necessary. Almighty wisdom. Perfect love and faithfulness. Has designed it. Precisely for you.

What a privilege to know that. Whatever we're going through. God is working it together. For our benefit. That's what Hezekiah says. All this was for my benefit.

[42:18] Will you believe that? Do you need a sign to believe that? Look to Calvary. Look to the empty grave. It's for your benefit. It was for my benefit.

He says. Because in my deliverance from death. I've tasted the love of God afresh. What's that worth to you? Is that not worth going down into the very valley of the shadow of death?

To taste afresh the love of God? Verse 17b. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction. And each deliverance gives us another taste of God's love.

He rescued me because He delighted in me. And a man will go into the throes of death to get another taste of God's delight in him.

And furthermore, I've tasted your forgiveness afresh. Verse 17 goes on to say. For you have put all my sins behind your back. You see, we're seeing a little more of what.

[43:16] Why was he so afraid of death? He thought it was God's curse upon him. But he sees no, my sins have been put behind his back.

His face is smiling upon me. And folks, it will take chapters 40 to the end of the book of Isaiah to unpack for us. How in the world can my sins and your sins be put behind the back of God forever? It's because those very sins were put upon the back of our substitute Savior. The servant of the Lord. And he bore our sins in his body to the tree.

Where he was cursed in our place. Damned in our place. That those sins that would have damned us. Might be forgiven. And put forever behind God's back.

What do you put behind you? You put behind you what you're not going to remember. What you're not going to think of anymore. And God puts our sins behind his back. For Jesus' sake.

[44:27] Are you trusting Jesus as your Savior? That could be true of you as well. All of our sins behind his back. It was good for me to come helpless to the very gates of death.

And to experience afresh God's love and forgiveness in sparing me. But oh, there's another benefit. And with this we close. Another benefit in this near-death experience.

Was that it brought into sharper focus the greatest reason for wanting to live. To praise God. Verses 18 to 20.

The grave cannot praise you. Death cannot sing your praise. It's the living. The living who praise you as I am doing today. It's not saying that Hezekiah had no hope beyond the grave.

But that corpses in the grave do not praise God. They do not gather together week by week. And sing wonderful grace of Jesus. Jesus. No.

[45:30] It's the living. Those in the land of the living. That praise you. Not the corpses in death. And notice this is what he's saying.

Is that this is the main business of life. Why is it that we are alive? And oh, how this searches us. Do you want to live another year?

Young person. Older person. Do you want to live another 15 years? Do you want to live another 20, 50 years? Why? I ask you. Why do you want to live on?

Why? What's wrong with death? And Hezekiah says, because then I wouldn't be able to stand here in this place week by week. And add my voice to the others in the land of the living and sing, how great thou art.

To be able to be living in this world and proclaiming the praises of God. And to be able to say to my children, do you realize how faithful God is?

[46:31] Spreading His fame. That's my whole reason for wanting to live on in the land of the living. To declare God's worth and praise.

David said it. Psalm 119, 175. Let me live that I may praise you. Is that why you want to live?

Is that why you'd like to have another 15 years or months or whatever? That you might fill the earth with your praises of God.

How much of your life is connected to this purpose? Go on. Walk through your day. Walk through your week. And ask yourself. Are there any areas of my life here in the land of the living that are unattached to this grand reason for living?

Let me live that I may praise you. And let that be the reason I want to do everything that I do with my life. Hezekiah recommits himself to this great purpose as he plans how he's going to use the last 15 years.

[47:43] I will sing the praises of my God all the days of my life. Verse 20. That's the only life worth living. That's the only life worth living. To live without praising God is a life spent in vain, he would say.

And secondly, I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul. Verse 15. That's how I'm going to spend the next 15 years.

I'm going to spend it praising God. That's why I live. I'm going to walk humbly. All my years. You see, he's been humbled by this event. That's a humbled king lying there on his bed.

It was good for him because it humbled him. And he says, I never want to lose the feeling of this experience of how weak and poor and needy I am.

I want this experience of near death to be seen in everything I do, making me walk humbly with my God throughout the days of my life.

[48:48] I want this mercy of his deliverance to have a sanctifying effect on how I live every day, all my days. And our troubles have indeed done us good if they make us walk humbly with our God and make us live to his praise.

So what's your number? How many more days do you have? What's your date? Well, it's kept from us.

But, you know, the length of life is not the important thing anyway. It's how we live it. That's what Hezekiah is going to show us. He's put the real issue before us.

It's not how long I live, but what do I do with the life? What will I do with today? That's where we start. How will I use today? Will it be to his praise? Will I walk humbly before him this day and every day?

Let me say in way of application, dear believer, God has delivered you from much more than a near-death experience. Rather, he has delivered every one of us believers from dying under God's wrath and experiencing the second death of everlasting torments in hell.

[50:12] Do you think that something of that should make us walk humbly the rest of our days? Do you think that something of that should make its influence to be felt and tasted and seen in our praise for God?

Has he spared me another night and waken me to another day? I have life. I'm alive. What's it for? It's to praise the Lord. Will it translate into that?

Oh, let us see this great cause for living and wanting to live. That he who delivered us from the second death might receive from us that mourning commitment.

Here I am, Lord. And we offer the members of our body to him to serve him as those who are alive from the dead. And unbeliever, here's the way to be ready to die.

Here's the way to be ready to stand before that throne that will expose everything you ever thought, did, or wanted to do.

[51:17] It is to be found in Jesus Christ, whose blood covers all sin and puts it behind the back of God forever. I invite you to him.

Come to me, he says, and find rest for your soul. Thank you.