

Our last study in Isaiah was about the miraculous healing of Hezekiah and the sign that God gave to encourage his faith. We saw how godly Hezekiah had been in bringing about a restoration of true worship in Israel, and even removing the high places where idols were worshiped (2Chronicles 30:1). But we ended with a hint that something was amiss in Hezekiah's heart, for he demanded a sign to be sure God had really spoken through Isaiah (Isaiah 38:22; John 2:18).

After Hezekiah's prayer was answered and the sign of the sun's shadow going backward came to pass, Hezekiah seemed to be on fire for the Lord. He wrote a poem promising to give thanks and praise the LORD. He promised to teach his children of God's faithfulness. He declared that he would make music to the LORD in the temple for the rest of his life (Isaiah 38:18-20). He was experiencing the high of a divine encounter.

Have you ever had a time when God seemed to be so real and near that you knew you *should* never be the same? I can recall a number of those times. As a young teenager I thought my mother was dying and prayed all the way to the hospital and made vows to God. There was a time in church when the text the pastor chose just grabbed me and wouldn't let me go. Another time was in a Bible study with some school friends who all knew Jesus was in our midst. When I was called into ministry was another time. You can't forget those encounters. They are a gift of God's grace to help strengthen our faith. Think for a moment of your own encounter. They are not necessary but help those of us whose faith is weak (Judges 6:17). The reality of our faith is seen after we come down from the emotional high.

Hezekiah was so moved that he wrote the psalms of ascension. He first wrote down in a poem how he should have responded. But sadly, he allowed the fire of passion for God to grow cold. That joy of answered prayer with its promise of fifteen years of life and protection to boot, slowly faded like a coal removed from a fire.

It doesn't happen all at once. Those psalms were probably penned over a number of years. But the cycle we have seen before with nations came to pass in his life. Blessing often brings financial prosperity. Prosperity can result in pride. We can begin to think that we are pretty clever and forget it all came from God's merciful hand. We begin to trust in the wealth instead of looking to God. The more we do so the more we take the glory for the accomplishments and blessings in our lives. As we do so we move further and further from that passionate fire we once had for the God we know spared us and showed us His greatness and His love (Isaiah 38:17).

We forget the vows we made and the earnest commitment we had to keep them. Before long our life begins to look like it did before our encounter with the living God, before His Word captured our minds and grabbed our hearts. **Let's call it the cycle of the untended fire (2Timothy 1:6).**

Commented [PW1]: 2 Chronicles 30:1 (ESV)

¹ Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel.

Commented [PW2]: Isaiah 38:22 (ESV)

²² Hezekiah also had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?"

Commented [PW3]: John 2:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"

Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 38:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ For 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.

²⁰ The LORD will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD.

Commented [PW5]: Judges 6:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And he said to him, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.

Commented [PW6]: Isaiah 38:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

Commented [PW7]: 2 Timothy 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

Just this morning Sandy Richards forwarded Spurgeon's morning devotion for today. He writes, "It is the incessant turmoil of this world, the constant attraction of earthly things which takes away the soul from Christ. While memory preserves a poisonous weed too well, it permits the Rose of Sharon to wither. Let's charge ourselves to bind a heavenly forget-me-not about our hearts for Jesus our Beloved, and, whatever else we let slip, let's hold fast to Him!"(1Corinthians 11:24)

Commented [PW8]: Do this in remembrance of me.

Hezekiah was the only king to stave off the Assyrian assault. The other defeated nations brought gifts to the LORD and to Hezekiah (2Chronicles 32:23). Later when word got around of his miraculous healing and the sign from God, the king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah. These kings wanted powerful allies and to be on the side of the allies whose god or gods were most powerful.

Commented [PW9]: 2 Chronicles 32:23 (ESV)

²³ And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

¹ At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. Isaiah 39:1 Babylon was one of the up and coming powers. If anyone could stop the Assyrians it would be this great power. The honor bestowed on Hezekiah was a real ego booster. But remember, God had already promised to protect Hezekiah from Assyria and given him a sign to assure him (Isaiah 38:6).

Commented [PW10]: Isaiah 38:6 (ESV)

⁶ I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.

So, what did Hezekiah do? Did he tell them how great YHWH is? Did he tell them how the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrians when Judah was helpless to do anything against them? Did he tell of how the Lord was the One who told him how to cure his illness? We don't have record of that. Instead we see him showing them how his wealth had returned and all the treasures of his fathers. *² And Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. And he showed them his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his whole armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.* Isaiah 39:2

Commented [PW11]: 2 Chronicles 32:25 (ESV)

²⁵ But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem.

The words "all" and "nothing" are used in three sets. Hezekiah showed them *all* the treasures in his storerooms and there was *nothing* in his house that he did not show them. This seems so strange, and yet I can see how pride would lead down this path. These envoys had come because they saw God had been with Hezekiah. Instead of sharing the testimonies of God's greatness, he shows how great he is by showing his wealth (2Chronicles 32:25).

The last day of our vacation an elderly lady walked up to us and said we looked like lovebirds. She asked how long we'd been married. We told her almost 40 years! She then proceeded on a monologue to tell us of the vacation clubs she belonged to, the places she and her husband were going next year and the year after that. I went away thinking how wealthy they were, which is exactly what I think she wanted us to go away thinking. **Our value is not in our wealth! It is in our relationship with God!** How often the Scriptures address this. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses (Luke 12:15).

Commented [PW12]: Luke 12:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

We can brag of wealth, or knowledge, or position, or fame, or any number of worldly things, but let the person who boasts boast in the Lord (1Corinthians 1:31). I wonder

Commented [PW13]: 1 Corinthians 1:31 (ESV)

³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

how history might have changed if Hezekiah focused his conversation with the Babylonians on the greatness of YHWH. Maybe they would have feared attacking Judah in the future instead of being incentivized by the wealth of Judah.

We saw that weakness in Hezekiah before when he tried to buy Egypt's help and again when he tried to pay off the Assyrians. Both attempts at leaning on money to save the nation failed. God alone could protect them. Now we see him falling back to faith in wealth as giving him meaning and value. Instead of tending the fire of passion and gratitude toward God, he is slipping back into his old weaknesses.

This is a repeated Biblical lesson. We see it in the judges Samson and Gideon (Judges 8:27). We see it in the kings David and Jehoshaphat (1Kings 22:48). We see it in the New Testament with Demas (2Timothy 4:10) and Diotrephes (3John 1:9). We see this in our neighbors who once attended church and had a vibrant relationship with Jesus, but now no longer have any desire for fellowship. The pride of life and the lust of the things of the world capture our thoughts (1John 2:15-17). **Once our imagination is given the freedom to roam, our flesh promises more than it can deliver.** It won't be long before our feet will follow and we end up in bondage to that from which we were once delivered (Galatians 1:6). It can happen to any of us if we don't tend the flame of passion and gratitude toward God.

How do we slip away from such great satisfaction and joy? We don't pay the price of time. A real relationship is a two way street. If we don't put anything in, we grow distant and our eyes begin to roam. In our carnal nature, we look for something that can satisfy our emptiness without costing us. "Won't somebody worship us? Won't some pleasure fulfill us?" No! The hole in our spirit is too big to be filled with anything other than God, but we know He places demands on our lives (Matthew 16:24).

Our hearts need to feast on God's Word. We need to be in fellowship with Him and one another. We need to be with Him in prayer. We need to listen to and obey the Holy Spirit. These are vital to keeping the flame burning. The way to keep our eyes from wandering is to be constantly filled with Jesus, overflowing and grateful.

Isaiah confronted Hezekiah. ³ *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."* ^{4a} *He said, "What have they seen in your house?"* Isaiah 39:3-4a Don't you think Hezekiah knew he was in trouble? I'm sure he had that uneasy feeling that he had failed God, but when Isaiah showed up he knew it. When Isaiah asked about the men, I would guess that conviction told him what Isaiah was about to say. At least, that is how it happens to me. When we disobey the Holy Spirit, we can run but we can't hide. Sooner or later "the hound of heaven" catches up with us and we know we have to answer to God and face the consequences.

Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them." Isaiah 39:4b At least Hezekiah was honest in his answer. Here is the second "all" and "nothing" I mentioned earlier. He was so eager to

Commented [PW14]: Judges 8:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.

Commented [PW15]: 1 Kings 22:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber.

Commented [PW16]: 2 Timothy 4:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

Commented [PW17]: 3 John 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

Commented [PW18]: 1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Commented [PW19]: Galatians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

Commented [PW20]: Matthew 16:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

show them his greatness rather than God's greatness that he had to show them every treasure he possessed. **When I'm talking about myself, I'm probably not talking about God.** That is unless I'm telling you how weak I am to show the mercy and greatness of God by contrast. If someone tells you of all their gifts and all the many ways God uses them to do incredible things, the red flags should go up. Pride is one of the most enslaving and destructive sins.

The serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field (Genesis 3:1). He'll convince you that it is ok to brag -I mean "explain"- how great a servant of God you are because it really shows how great God is. Or maybe it's good to tell how much you have because it shows God's blessings on your life. But really, when you are talking about yourself, it's not about God. It's about you.

Then Isaiah told Hezekiah the consequences of his sin. *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.* Isaiah 39:6 There is the last set of "all" and "nothing". All in his house would be taken and nothing would be left. It was the utter captivity of Judah and all the physical blessings they so highly esteemed. If that is what it takes to humble us and get us to turn from our idols to the everlasting God, it is an act of mercy.

Was Hezekiah's sin really so bad? Well, the more we know and experience, the more accountable we are (Luke 12:48). It would really be the fruit of Hezekiah's apathetic end of life that would assure captivity for the nation. While he would be remembered as one of the best kings, his son would go down as one of the worst (2Chronicles 33:9).

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." Isaiah 39:7 Hezekiah may have once hoped to father the messiah, but now is told some of his descendants will be eunuchs in the palace of Babylon.

While Hezekiah had promised to relay God's faithfulness to his children, his son Manasseh was one of the worst kings in the history of the nation. It was written that captivity of the nation had to come because of Manasseh's great sins (2Kings 24:3). Manasseh was born during the fifteen extra years of life that God promised to Hezekiah.

The Chronicles tell us that captivity was held off during the life of Hezekiah because when he heard this word from the Lord, he humbled himself (2Chronicles 32:26). He recognized his fault and again repented.

⁸ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days." Isaiah 39:8 When I first read this I thought how selfish and heartless he must have been. But considering that the Chronicles tell us he had repented, I read it differently. I think he saw this promise to hold off on captivity as God's mercy. He must have thought they deserved to have it come sooner, considering his ingratitude and prideful behavior. Perhaps he was saying

Commented [PW21]: Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Commented [PW22]: Luke 12:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Commented [PW23]: 2 Chronicles 33:9 (ESV)

⁹ Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

Commented [PW24]: 2 Kings 24:3 (ESV)

³ Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done,

Commented [PW25]: 2 Chronicles 32:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

God is gracious and just and more merciful than I deserve (Lamentations 3:22). It is a good word from God in that it showed an extension of the time of mercy.

I wonder if we, as a nation, aren't in a similar situation. Look at all the times God has intervened for this nation, saved us from destruction, and shown Himself mighty to save. What has been the nation's response? We take pride in our wealth, but we have such a huge debt no one expects it will ever be paid. Have we responded with the appropriate gratitude and fanned the flames of passion toward God to keep them burning strong?

While we may not be able to respond for our nation, we can certainly respond for ourselves as individuals. Will we humble ourselves like Hezekiah did? Is it too late to spare our children? Is our next president a Hezekiah or a Manasseh? We will see. We don't have to wait to humble ourselves before God and acknowledge our own ingratitude and failure to fan the flames of passion for Him.

I am convicted of my own ingratitude. I've been blessed with so much and yet I whine about the littlest things. I have a new motto to help me apply my repentant heart. "Ruthlessly deal with whining!" God help us quit whining and start rejoicing. Instead of talking about the petty complaints, let's talk about how blessed we are in the Lord. Maybe more people would consider Christ if they heard us talking about the joy we have in Him rather than all the things that don't go just like we'd like them.

Let us commit to doing those things Hezekiah meant to do. Let's keep praising and thanking God. Let's not stop telling our children and grandchildren about God's faithfulness to us (Deuteronomy 6:7). Whatever God has planned for the coming years, our children will be better off if they know they can rely upon God. We may have unintentionally given them the message that money is the answer, but from now on let's tell them the truth. A relationship with Jesus is all that matters.

Do you want to prepare your children for what is coming? Tell them about the faithfulness of God. Tell them how He has met you in your need. Tell them how important it is to fan the flames of gratitude when God meets them in their need and answers their prayers so that they don't slip away and again trust in things that can't help them. TEND THE FLAME OR IT WILL DIE!

Questions

- 1 What is the hint something is wrong in Hezekiah's heart?
- 2 Have you had a God encounter?
- 3 What is the cycle of nations and many lives?
- 4 What did Hezekiah tell the envoys and why?
- 5 How do we slip away?
- 6 How do we keep the flame burning?
- 7 Review the three "all" and "nothing" uses.
- 8 Why did captivity not come sooner?
- 9 How should we interpret verse 8?
- 10 How have you responded to God's intervention in your life? How will you respond?

Commented [PW26]: Lamentations 3:22 (ESV)

²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

Commented [PW27]: Deuteronomy 6:7 (ESV)

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

11 When will you share God's faithfulness to you with your children?